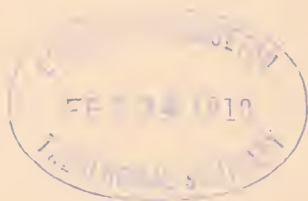


THE DIVIDED HOUSE

EDWIN E. ROGERS

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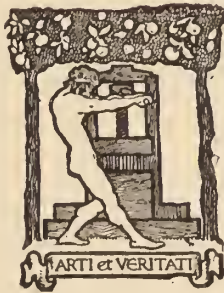
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THE DIVIDED HOUSE

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EDWIN E. ROGERS

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PREFACE

HAS not the church of Christ arrived at that conception of her place in the world where she should become conscious of the incongruities of her present divided state? Is it not reasonable to suppose that the Christian conscience of this generation has become sufficiently sensitive to be aroused by the existing evils of our present denominationalism? Has not the time come when we should expect a higher and more pronounced state of piety than present day Christians manifest? Can we expect the Christian ever to attain any very high degree of Christian character while there rankles in his heart such feelings towards persons whom he recognizes as Christians as to lead him to refuse to throw down the denominational partition which separates him from them? Such questions and the reflections which have followed have led to the writing of the following pages.

If some of the strictures upon denominations to some seem severe, or if the implied condemnation of some classes of persons appear harsh, will you not judge kindly, and pardon graciously, for be assured that only the most intense longing to speak truly has moved the writer. All along there has been an honest effort to be perfectly fair. The endeavor has been made to present the actual situation as it exists in our midst to-day. No imaginary condition has been presented, but there has been the endeavor to paint the picture from real life. From beginning to end there has been one overmastering desire, a prayer breathed on every page, that the Name of the Blessed Lord may be honored, and that His prayer, offered in the upper room on that last night, may speedily be answered, "That they all

may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.”

EDWIN E. ROGERS,

The Manse, Bowling Green, Ohio.

December 1, 1916.

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INTRODUCTORY

PROFESSOR CHARLES WOODRUFF SHIELDS, of Princeton University, in his book, *The United Church in the United States*, in the opening sentence of the preface, says, "It has been becoming evident to many thoughtful observers that the chief Christian problem of our age is the reunion of Christendom, and that the most favorable conditions for its solution are found in the New World." Twenty-one years have elapsed since this was written. During this time so many, and so important, changes in the relations which exist between the great denominations of the country have taken place that one looks in surprise and wonders whether the situation at that time may not have been a vision of things in a remote past. Slowly a spirit of brotherhood between the members of the various denominations has been developing. The tendency to form federations, for convenience in carrying on Christian work, weak and uncertain at the first, has become a mighty factor in religious effort, and is full of promise. That unity which a few years ago only a few were bold enough to suggest has come to be a popular theme for pulpit and platform. With varying success efforts have been made in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Canada and the United States to bring about the amalgamation of some of the denominations. The conviction expressed by Professor Shields has been extending farther and farther, as well as deepening. It must, however, be admitted that the leaders in our churches appear to have

experienced no very profound conviction concerning the obligations of church unity. It is looked upon as something desirable, a kind of millennial ideal, so far removed from present possibilities that busy practical men need give it no special consideration. The whole subject is looked upon as the fancy of dreamers.

The attitude of the church and her leaders is aptly illustrated by a story told by Dr. Robert Bruce, of the University College, London, in his book, *Apostolic Order and Unity*. He reports a conversation which once took place between a Mohammedan priest and a Missionary. The priest asks, "How many sects have you in England?"

Missionary. "I never counted them; but presume we have as many as Mohammed said we should have."

Priest. "What did Mohammed, peace be upon him, say?"

M. "Art thou a teacher in Islam, and knowest not what thy prophet said?"

P. "Well, what did he say?"

M. "It is written in your tradition that the prophet said, 'There were seventy sects in the religion of Moses, only one of whom went to heaven; there were seventy-one sects among the Christians, ditto; and there will be seventy-two sects among my followers, only one of whom will be saved.' " The Christian leaders while applauding church unity as a theory appear to have settled down in the conviction that while we may deplore the present unfortunate situation, we find it everywhere, and in all religions, consequently we need not be unnecessarily disquieted. We therefore go on strengthening the bonds which hold us in disunion. We have become so acclimated to this kind of spiritual climate that it seems to have ceased to be even distasteful to us. Döllinger, of the University of Munich, in his book, *The Reunion of the Churches*, more than forty years ago made this statement, which applies with equal force to-day: "It cannot be denied that there is something repulsive in the present aspect of the Christian world,

with its sharply divided and hostile churches and sects naturally hating and incriminating one another. And were we not accustomed to the sight from our youth up it would strike us as still uglier, and the contrast between the idea and the reality would be more glaring in our eyes." But because we have spent our lives in such an ecclesiastical chaos we have grown familiar with the din of discordant notes. We speak glibly of the ideal of unity, then do all within our power to predetermine that such an ideal shall never become a reality.

We discover some hopeful tendencies. There is marked disquiet under present conditions. All sorts of questions are being discussed. The church is being led from her former lines of work into an innumerable number of new departments. We are hearing much of "Social Service," and are discussing "Social Regeneration" as something just discovered and brought to light. Turning aside from the old ideas of Christianity, when it was spoken of as a "Faith," we speak of it as a "Life." Men have grown impatient under "Creeds" and clamor for the "Christ Spirit," if any one may know just what this may be. A new phraseology has grown up within the last twenty years which would have been to the fathers an unknown tongue. We have developed a whole race of ecclesiastical specialists. We have specialists in Sunday School work, specialists in gathering congregations, specialists in raising church debts, specialists for work among the young people, on the "downtown church," the "country church," "the social life of the church," specialists on church entertainments, temperance, the "White Slave" traffic, specialists in preaching against infidelity, specialists in evangelism, in short, about every possible kind of work has found specialists who assume to have mastered all the intricacies of the trade and are ready to take charge of this for the time and lead the congregation from beneath all her burdens. With this condition there has developed a tendency on the part of men generally to consider the old-fashioned work of the Pastor as out of

date. In the present day his principal work appears to be to arrange dates and make the necessary preparations for the advent of the specialist. It is the specialist who is really to bring results. This nervous restlessness would seem to indicate a conviction that the church is failing to accomplish what she should. Because of such failure the Pastors and church Boards resort to these ingenious devices as a means to strengthen the lines of Protestantism. This restlessness indicates a real dissatisfaction with our present religious status. We appear to understand that the Kingdom of God is not moving on as it should and we take these methods to hasten its progress.

Over against this we find a line of tendencies, mentioned by Professor Shields (*The Historic Episcopate*, p. 7). "The Churches of the Old World as transferred to the New, compacted together under one political system, have been growing like each other through social intercourse and unconscious imitation. Protestants have been reviving the Catholic sisterhood and fraternity under new names and guises; while Catholics are resorting to the Protestant platform and newspaper in their conflicts and troubles. Episcopalians have restored Presbyterian elements to their polity and extempore prayers to their liturgy; while Presbyterians are recovering episcopal agencies of administration and liturgical modes of worship. Both Presbyterians and Episcopalians have learned something from the Methodist revival; while Methodists have learned to have choirs and divinity schools as well as camp-meetings and lay-preachers." This pronounced tendency indicates a movement, not apart, but towards each other of the various denominations. We appear to have arrived at the point where the differences seem to have become so slight that it is difficult to distinguish between some of the denominations. While denominational leaders have struggled hard to hold together each his own group of churches, and the changes have been rung out on the particular denominational shibboleths as a means of

rallying the scattered forces, still we must admit that within the last decade there has been a remarkable diminution of the old-fashioned denominational spirit. As at no time since the days of Calvin, Luther, and their associates in the Reformation, the spirit of hostility between the churches has seemed to die down. Even the clergy have so far lost their former hatred of other ecclesiastical organizations than their own, that it has become quite easy for a clergyman of one denomination to go over into another. It was not long ago when such a thing would have caused an ugly scandal.

Now such a change of church relations is common, causing no serious comment. As a Presbyterian the writer is more familiar with his own church than with the others, but it is not improbable that what is true of the Presbyterian body is also true of sister denominations. In the year ending March 31, 1909, 88 ordained ministers entered the Presbyterian Church coming from other denominations. In 1910, 98; 1911, 140; 1912, 118; and in 1913, 141; 1914, 142; 1915, 139, and 1916, 121. When we remember that in 1916 the number of young men in the Presbyterian Church ordained to the ministry was 266, while 121 came from other denominations, we readily see how small a barrier denominational lines have become. During the five years ending with March 31, 1913, there was an average of a little more than 213 young men ordained to the ministry, in the Presbyterian Church, each year. There was an annual average of 117 who entered the ministry of this church from other denominations. Almost 36 per cent of the increase of the ministry in the Presbyterian Church came from other denominations. For the sake of further comparison, going back to the year 1890 we find that for the five preceding years only 6 1-10 per cent of those entering the ministry in the Presbyterian body came from other denominations. In about twenty years the number of ministers entering the Presbyterian Church from other denominations increased from 6 1-10 to 36 per cent, an increase in ratio of 600 per cent. When we

remember that the lines drawn about the ministry in this denomination are more exacting, and are more rigidly adhered to than in others, we see how the denominational lines, which a generation ago were so strong that for a man to go from the ministry of one denomination to that of another was esteemed sufficient to cause him to lose caste among his brethren, are wasting away. Formerly such a deflection was a subject for adverse comment and severe criticism not merely by the denomination from which the man went, but by the religious press of all denominations. The day has come when such a change can take place, and a man's standing not suffer. This, evidently, is due to the fact that the differences which divide communions have come to be considered of far less moment than formerly. The large number of ministers from other denominations entering the ministry of the Presbyterian Church seems to indicate that in all the denominations less stress is laid upon doctrinal differences than formerly. Men are no longer, even in the ministry, held fast by denominational ties. Whether we deplore this as evidence of a decadent state of church life, or look upon it as indicative of a higher type of true religion, the fact must be admitted. It shows that a change has certainly taken place. It marks a decided trend away from the controversial spirit of a generation ago to a condition far more favorable to a final coming together of the various denominations into one grand church of Christ. From these indications we would judge that the pioneer work already accomplished is bearing fruit. With the passing away of old antagonisms a new spirit of fraternity is becoming dominant. Why should not the church of Christ take advantage of this condition? Why should not the leaders of the church commence in real earnest a movement which may speedily culminate in a single organization for the present divided kingdom of God on earth?

There are many men, who are loyal to their own denominations, whose loyalty to the teachings of the Scrip-

tures, as interpreted by their denominations none would suspect, who have labored earnestly for the building up of the kingdom of God in denominational lines, who for some time have been under the conviction that we are working at a great disadvantage. Not a few are convinced that while the church is divided into so many factions there can be only a partial success for her. There has been, it may be somewhat slowly, developing a conviction, which with many is becoming oppressive, that this divided state of the church is a manifestation of a spirit of hostility. It seems to be evidence of a lack of that genuine Christian love, which is being so loudly, and rightly, applauded. It looks too suggestive of a relation between the Christians, so unlike Christ, that for the peace of Christendom the different sects must be treated like the animals in the menagerie, each placed in a separate cage, or falling upon each other there will be a battle to the death. Such a spirit certainly has very little of Christlikeness in it. While we may highly reverence the founders of our denominations, we can scarcely claim that to maintain denominational contentions in our day shows in any marked degree Christian character. It is unthinkable that the Great Head of the church can look with any measure of complacency upon the distrust, the antagonisms, the contentious spirit, the wastefulness of men and money, and the unpardonable extravagance in the use of Divine grace, involved in our present denominational struggles.

One may well question whether there has been a time since Pentecost until the opening of the Twentieth Century, when the church has needed a reformation more sorely than she does to-day. When we consider the church in her morals she is not as far in advance of the community in which she exists as she should be. Is she producing men of profoundly godly character, whose piety shines forth as evidence of an indwelling spirit? Are the leaders of the church men renowned for spiritual purity and humility? If there is to be a Moderator of a General Assembly, a President of a Conference, the

election of a Bishop, the selection of some one to stand at the head of his denomination self-constituted candidates rise up on every side. The methods to which aspirants resort to secure the coveted honors cause even seasoned politicians to smile. If there be a vacant pulpit at all desirable, the number of applicants for the place, persons in every instance, holding less desirable positions is appalling. If we may judge from appearances it is true that among Christians, members of the church, and even in the ministry, there is a similar thirst for honor and place as exists in the heart of the irreligious and worldly. We must admit an appalling deficiency in deep, real godliness. This we find in all classes from the worldly spirited member of the church to the denominational leaders. The most conspicuous evangelists of our time are none of them famous for their piety. It is suggestive that since the church commenced her divisive course, bringing forth brood after brood of denominations, piety, that peculiar type of character which in spirit is Christlikeness, has not been conspicuous. It is true that great men, great churchmen, have lived, but far too often their greatness was manifested to the best advantage in controversy. There must be something wrong in the kind of character which our modern Christianity is producing. This may be illustrated by supposing that somewhere among the western mountains two communities grew up. Suppose that these communities were near together, and rivalries developed. The bitterness increased until a kind of internecine warfare resulted. So long as such contentions continued would you expect a very strong, devout religious character to develop? Has it been our experience that when there is dissension in a little community, or a country congregation, the condition favored the highest and most devout type of religious experience? The spirit of controversy is always looked upon as unfavorable to religious growth. Now for more than four hundred years Christendom has been rent asunder by controversy. Such a state is inimical to the develop-

ment of a devout faith, a simple trust in God, and that humble sweetness of character which indicates that the man has lost himself in Christ his Lord.

It can scarcely be necessary for us to proceed farther. It is evident that there is something wrong in the church. Were this not the case we would not have such a multitude of separate camps of the Master's hosts. Doubtless, we all regret exceedingly the situation. It is the prayer of every believer, not that the Great Head of the church would establish more firmly these divisions, but that our differences might disappear, and that the church might be one, even as the Son is one with the Father. It is true that we all greatly desire that among all the people of God there might be perfect harmony. We may at times defend denominationalism, nevertheless while so doing we deeply regret that denominations exist. In the moments when we come nearest to Christ, when the world recedes and the things of God appear as the great and only realities, when the spiritual life appears as the one only thing worthy of the human soul, then as the state of the church, so divided, comes before us the heart is filled with unutterable sadness. As we go from city to city and from country village to country village those structures, edifices which should be to the glory of the crucified Lord, rise before us, each bearing the stamp of some particular denomination, representing an angry controversy, which separated those who should have been brothers in Christ, and that which should have been a monument of infinite love redeeming a lost world, is sadly transformed and becomes a memorial of human discord and theological controversy. It is not true that the names Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, Episcopal, Lutheran, and a multitude of other similar appellations stand for the church. The name church means Christ, and stands for Him. These other names to the thoughtful student of church history bring to mind periods of contention and strife. All these separate bodies equally believe in Christ. They all believe, and with a measure

of zeal proclaim the same fundamental doctrines of salvation. They preach the same crucified Lord. They differ not in their desire to lead the lost world to a Savior. Not one of these names stand for these doctrines. The church stands for these. These names are simply the scars left from controversy. These scars, blemishes on our beloved Christianity, we are seeking to our own dishonor, to perpetuate. Yes, there is something wrong in the church. It is time that Christians should arouse themselves, and set themselves seriously at work to right the wrong. One cannot restrain the intense desire that the old theological battlefields might be left behind forever, and that the multitude of the divisions of the church of our Lord might come together in one splendid, harmonious, glorious body of Christ.

CHAPTER I

A SITUATION

THE Reformation of the 16th Century was preceded by a season of general religious unrest. This resulted from a variety of contributing causes. The church had become formal and worldly. Her leaders devoted their time to political intrigues and ecclesiastical contention. The people remained uninstructed in the elements of religion. There was little real devout earnest effort to attain a genuine religious character. The priesthood having left its place of honor, as leading in religious living, and turning to the pleasures of this life, grew sensual and avaricious and became a reproach to the church. It was an open secret that not unfrequently the clergy while continuing in the ministry of their holy office indulged in excesses and practices which scandalized whole communities. Contentions arose between ecclesiastical leaders and temporal rulers. There was frequent discord among high church dignitaries. The church seemed no longer a spiritual power, but her holy officials had become ambitious aspirants for worldly fame and riches. The Albigenses in southern France, and the Waldenses in northern Italy, through reformatory councils had endeavored to resist the depressing influences everywhere engulfing the church. Individuals, like Wiclif and the Lollards in England, John Huss in Bohemia, Arnold and Savonarola in Italy, had uttered their protests and sought to arouse the church to a consciousness of her danger. Here and there appeared men of less prominence who dissatisfied with the existing state of things were sincerely striving to attain a purer faith and a holier life. The

leaders of the church were deaf to every sound of discontent while they quarreled with the German princes over temporalities. Their profligacy increased their need of funds and there was deep scheming to provide larger financial resources. A great effort was put forth to secure money that buildings of vast proportions under construction might be carried to completion. Among the people there developed general dissatisfaction. Not a few of the clergy, grieving over what seemed to them so sad a condition in the church, sought with commendable fidelity to cultivate in their parishes a true and devout type of religious life. They longed for and earnestly prayed for a reform, but were helpless to bring it about. In some of the universities were found instructors, conspicuous for the purity of their lives and their devout spirit, like John Staupitz in Germany, Robert d'Olivet in France, who were seeking to lead the church from the existing corruptions in life and faith to the simpler teachings of the Scriptures. Such a condition in the church could not fail to bring her into disrepute. The people honored the godly men whom they recognized here and there, but the great organization, the church, which claimed to be the vehicle of Divine grace, was fast ceasing to be revered. Her teachers were disregarded and her authority was spurned. Infidelity sprung up on all sides and there was evidence of a coming religious collapse. At this time the father of John Calvin, an official in the church, loyal to her teachings, who had determined to dedicate his son to her service, foresaw the coming storm and diverted his promising child from holy orders to the law. Among a class of men who sincerely gave themselves to a careful study of the religious condition of the day there were some who openly expressed a longing for purer things. Others seeming to have lost their confidence in religion, discarding the claims of the church became open unbelievers. To a few it appeared necessary to look elsewhere than to the church for leadership in any general religious reform. There was a

breaking away from the old authority and a disposition for every man in his own way to seek to build for himself a basis of authority upon which a purified ecclesiastical organization might be established. At this time the great leaders of the Reformation appeared: Luther, Calvin, Melanethon, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and their associates. As earnest and true men they commenced to feel their way, each differing from all the others in many minor matters. They all agreed as to the necessity to break away from the established church. Besides the great leaders a multitude of lesser lights sprung up, striving to build up an organization which should embody their peculiar views. As the Reformation continued and the leading reformed churches, the Lutheran in Germany, the Reformed in Switzerland, France and the Netherlands, extending over the Channel into Scotland, and permeating England, became established, it was discovered that the spirit of disintegration which had been strengthened by the discussion out of which these organizations had grown was most powerfully working through the whole Protestant body. With respect for the old ecclesiastical authorities destroyed, with a suspicion of any man, or circle of men who might be acquiring unusual influence, the new movement was left without a steadying hand. Wanting in solidarity, it fell into unfortunate extremes. No man was bound by any authority, not even by custom to recognize any particular leader. No one man was recognized as a leader of all. Every one conceiving himself to be under no outside restraint pushed ahead to find a way of work and a system of faith which might best comport with the ideals which he was forming. The result was not alone many different schemes of faith and polity, but an undue magnifying of rival theories. This gave to them for the time a place of fictitious importance. The authority of the old church was gone. The Reformed church, unable to unify herself, had failed to attain a place of authority. There was thrown open a field for ecclesiastical exploitation and many hastened to take

advantage of the opportunity. For more than three hundred years we have been reaping the fruit of this unfortunate situation. The spirit of disunion has proven to be the evil genius of Protestantism. Its work has been so widespread that venturesome indeed would be the man who to-day would presume to give the number of Protestant denominations. The number runs into the hundreds, we meet them everywhere. Each of these organizations claim to stand for some separate truth sufficiently essential to true Christianity to justify the forming of a separate organization for the purpose of proclaiming this truth, which is made a matter of conscience. Some of these divisions have grown out of distinctively theological questions, such as Calvinism, and Lutherism, and others. Some took for their point of departure a question of church government, as for example, the Episcopalian Church, Presbyterian and Congregational. Again others split upon the question of liturgy or no liturgy. We have almost every conceivable thing made a basis for some new religious denomination. These denominations have usually, we had almost said, always, been started by some man, an individual, who because of some fancied discovery, theological possibly or because he felt himself restrained in his liberty, knowing that there was an open field led forth a little company of followers and commenced the struggle to establish a new church. Most unfortunate for the cause of Christianity has been the result. H. K. Carroll, LL.D., who for years has been the head of the ecclesiastical department of the Census Bureau, at Washington, from his intimate familiarity with the denominational divisions of this country makes the statement, that "No denomination has thus far proved to be too small for division." The great denominations have broken up into smaller ones, which in turn have again divided, and the fragments have gone on and divided again. Sometimes the divisions hold precisely the same creed, and employ the same polity or form of government. Not unfrequently the members of these separate

denominations are unable to tell intelligently, just how their church differs from another. The Census gives twelve different kinds of Presbyterians, thirteen different kinds of Baptists, and that the Methodist persuasion may be properly cared for they have split themselves into seventeen different denominations, each being Methodist. We have in our own country some say 143 different Protestant denominations, and some make the number even greater. What a spectacle is this to the unchristian world! No wonder that men think lightly of the church. What must the unbeliever think of a faith which engenders such controversy? Is it strange that sometimes when an unbeliever is urged to consider the claims of Christianity, and to take his place as a Christian before the world that the insolent question is hurled back, "What kind"? It is true that Christians have always and everywhere greatly regretted the situation. We admit, with sadness, that it is a great, a lamentable misfortune, but still we continue the divisions.

Within the last forty years a notable change in the spirit of the churches has taken place. Fifty and more years ago, much of the emphasis of preaching was on the drawing of the line which separated the given denomination from all others. Sermons showing the falacy of the position of other churches and the logical position of "our own" were common and popular. The fraternal spirit was so weak as to be scarcely recognizable, the dominant spirit, in both pulpit and pew, was intense partizanship. The Methodist, wherever he went remained a Methodist, being scarcely willing to enter a building of another denomination. This was true of all the denominations. A minister of one denomination was almost never seen in a pulpit of another church. Friendly co-operation among the denominations of a community was practically unheard of. A happy change has come about. To-day we find a readiness among all Christian churches to join in fraternal relation. The evidence of this is found in the very general

exchange of pulpits and co-operation in a variety of ways. It has ceased to be a denominational scandal, or even difficult for a minister of one denomination to accept a pastorate in another. Such a passing of denominational lines has become a simple news item in a religious paper. Among the laymen, when a Methodist or Presbyterian moves from one town to another it is far from certain what denomination he will choose for a church home. As a rule to-day, in our cities, where there is an opportunity for a choice, more depends upon the pastor of a church than upon its denominational connection. There is no Presbyterian Church whose membership is not drawn from nearly all other denominations. This is true of the Methodist, Congregationalist and other churches. The old spirit of hostility on the part of men and women towards other denominations than their own is steadily disappearing. The denominational name to-day has far less influence than it had fifty years ago. The change has not stopped at this point. Laymen and ministers here and there are seriously asking why do we have so many churches? Do we need them? With good reason men are asking why do we need twelve different kinds of Presbyterians, or seventeen different kinds of Methodists? Some are going so far as to raise the question, with all seriousness, why should we have Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalist at all? Are not all Christian? Do not all believe in the same Christ? Have we not all the same Holy Scriptures, and do we not all worship the same God? Do we not believe that we are all directed by the same Holy Spirit? Do we not pray to the same Deity, for the same things and in the same manner? Do we not give thanks for the same benefits, to the same blessed God? Do we not sing the same hymns in our praise? Are we not agreed upon every doctrine essential to salvation? Do we not to-day recognize the members of all evangelical churches as Christians? Then why should we refuse to work together, and to worship together? Why should we divide the

Lord's hosts into a multitude of smaller camps, independent each of all the others? Why should the great army of Christ be forcibly divided into so many little armies, which are in an important sense, hostile to each other? Men have commenced to see that in such a condition we find something incongruous with the nature of our religion. They are asking why should such a condition exist. We are forced to admit that such questions are pertinent. They ought to make us thoughtful. That we may see how this appears to the man outside the church, to a so-called man of the world, let us take a concrete instance, not a fictitious case, something fancied as a possibility, to illustrate, but a case which occurred in our own country, and within the last few years. Its spirit could be duplicated hundreds of times.

Some years ago nestling in a beautiful valley among the mountains of Idaho was a little town. It started as a mining camp. A few enterprising farmers had taken up some government land and the village was fast becoming permanent and prosperous. The settlers, both miners and farmers, were a good natured, ambitious company of men, but almost entirely without religious training or interest. The usual conditions found under such circumstances existed in this village. Drinking was universal, immorality was common, and the Christian Sabbath was devoted to excesses of all kinds. Gambling was universal. In the carousals of the day it was not unfrequent that some one was badly injured, and now and then a life was snuffed out. It was said that in all the community, in the village, among the neighboring farmers, or those working in the mines there was not a single man known to have been religious. A young slender fellow, fresh from one of our Eastern Theological Schools, under commission of one of the Home Mission Boards, visited the town. He was convinced that here was the opportunity for which he was in search. Not sure that he could accomplish anything, or even persuade the rough men to permit him to remain long, he decided to remain over the following Sabbath, and

if possible preach. He was surprised to find how readily the men took hold of the matter and easily he secured a congregation which included the larger part of the men of the entire community. There was no church building, or hall which was deemed suitable, by the men, but they joined together and cleared out the largest saloon in the town, and arranged for its use as a place of worship. During the services the bar was closed, and gambling ceased. All were eager to hear what the young preacher would have to say. The men, rough and godless, were nevertheless pleased with the straightforward boldness of the young man, and though he did not hesitate to condemn their mode of life, they believed him to be sincere and immediately proposed that he become their preacher, and remain with them. They had saloons, several, a good general store, a dance hall, a place which was called a hotel, and now if they had a church they would be complete, yes, they must have a church for their town was a wide awake, enterprising place, and with a church they would have all that a town needed. They were pleased with the young man, and they would have him stay. So the invitation was given to the young minister to remain, and they would provide for him. It soon became evident to the men that a saloon was not the place for their religious services and they must have a building. At once they raised the money and put up a church building. Without help they raised for their minister a salary of \$1,800 per year, and everything started off in a very satisfactory manner. The town grew, there were converts, a church was organized and shared in the prosperity of the place. In a couple of years the place was a prosperous growing village of several hundred inhabitants. Another missionary, about this time, hearing of the town, and that there was but one church, and as it appeared that the place would become an important strategic point, made a tour of exploration to the village. He was pleased with what he found and decided to remain and open a mission of his own denomination. A

few weeks passed. His purpose became evident to the men of the town. He selected a site for his new building, and went out into the community to raise as much money as he could to erect another church building. The community, at first suspicious, when they saw him actually preparing to build, was displeased. A conference was quietly held, and one day a committee visited the young man and made a statement to him something like this: "You want to build in this town a new church. We are not able to support two churches. We do not need two churches. We can take good care of one and we will do it. We will not have two churches, so you can just move on, or we will move you. The men of this town have appointed us a committee to give you our minds on this subject, and to see that you go." The missionary who went to the town first, was the man who told me the story, and he added, "The man who hoped to build the second church decided that he would not remain and moved on." It may be true that this was a somewhat unusual and rough manner to deal with such a case, but it was really effective. After all were not the rough miners right? It may seem a little severe to our modern ideals, to put a preacher of the Gospel in the class of undesirables, but are we not compelled to admit that under the circumstances these men showed a most excellent judgment? Had all the new towns which have been springing up through the great western country during the past seventy years taken a similar determined stand it would have saved our Home Missions Boards millions of dollars, and the probabilities are that to-day the religious condition of our country would be in better condition than it is.

In every small town we find a group of little feeble churches. Their buildings are cheap, and out of repair. Their half starved pastors are waging a kind of internecine warfare in a running struggle to maintain their precarious existence by gaining members from their competitors. Not long ago an incident occurred which shows how such a course impresses an unchristian

business man. This also occurred in one of our western states and in a mountain town. The pastor of one of five churches, in a village of a few hundred people, decided that for the accommodation of several of his country members, living so far distant that they drove to church, it would be wise to erect a number of horse-sheds. In the village there was one general store owned by a successful, shrewd business man. He was not a Christian nor was he frequently at any church. The minister could readily see that these proposed sheds would be a great convenience to the customers of this store. Six days in the week the men who came to make their purchases here would use the sheds and one day they would be used by persons attending church. The merchant was therefore approached and asked if he would donate a keg of nails for the building of the sheds. It was explained to him how great a benefit would accrue to his customers. "Yes," he said, "I suppose that I will have to give anyway," so he gave the nails. The minister thanked him and was turning to leave when the merchant called him back and preached to the minister the kind of a sermon which was lodged in his mind. This is the substance of what he said: "Why do your Christian people have so many churches in this little town? It does not seem to me like good business sense. What would you think of me if I, who could do twice the business which I am now doing, with the same help, in my present building, if I only had the business, should go up yonder on the hillside and put up another building, stock it, secure clerks and a book-keeper and run it in opposition to this one? Not content with this, suppose that I go over on that corner, and put up still another building and fit it out with the necessary stock of goods and put in the help, and open it up? A little later I go down into the middle of the next block over there, and build a fourth building. I go on building stores, fitting them out and putting in the help until I have in this town five separate stores selling the same kind of goods, competing with each other. Would

you think me a fool or crazy? Well, this seems to me to be about the way that you Christians are trying to do business. You came to this town some time ago, and put up that church on the hillside, called the Congregational church, which was all right, for we needed one church. Then the Methodists came and built another, over on the corner. It was not long before the Baptists appeared, purchased a lot, and erected their building. Then came the Presbyterians and the Episcopals. At once you men, the preachers of these churches, begin to go up and down our streets saying, "Come to my church, it is really the best church in town." You, a Congregationalist, tell me that yours is the simplest, best kind of religion. The Baptist minister follows you and explains that while you are pretty good you are not loyal to the Bible in some ways. The Baptist Church is just right. He is followed by the Methodist minister who says that the only real, live, spiritual type of Christianity is found in his church. He offers the simon-pure article. The Presbyterian man tells me that while the other churches have the right aim, his is the most intelligent, and Presbyterians instead of being controlled by the emotions, are under the control of reason and conviction. The rector of the Episcopal Church tells me that you are all renegades, that in a fit of anger you broke away, and set up for yourselves, and that he represents the only original pure Apostolic Church. Now I know very little about religion, as I have never experienced anything of the sort, but tell me, which of you fellows are right? Whom is a man like me to believe? One thing seems sure, and you all have to admit it, that it does not matter much which a man takes, and some of us come to feel that possibly it does not make much difference whether we take any of your religions. No, Sir, I will not mix up with any of you. How can I tell whether any of you are right? I say let a man do the best he can, and then take his chances. It is just as well to do this outside your churches as inside, so far as I can see."

While we do not approve of this man's position, or accept his philosophy, still we are forced to admit that it has logic. He is a plain uneducated man of the world. He understands some of the principles of business, as it is conducted in Idaho, and from this he reasons. He shows clearly how the competition between the five churches appeared to him. The man who was the pastor of the little struggling Congregational church, and who gave the incident was the first man to open religious services in the community. So long as his was the only church in town his work was abundantly prosperous. The congregations increased in numbers, persons united with the church, the influence of the church in the town was felt so there was a general improvement in the moral conditions of the community. As the other churches became established interest seemed to be divided, the influence of religion diminished, people became irregular in their attendance, and the churches were forced to struggle for existence. The prevailing belief was that it does not much matter what a man believes, or how he lives, provided he be a good, square, honest man. With five organized churches, and five men working hard in a community, which would furnish a good support for one church, the aggregate attendance was scarcely more than it was when there was but a single church. The preachers were looked upon by the community as competitors. Whether in the pulpit, on the streets, or in the homes, they were considered as each trying "to outshine" the others. The rough, boisterous, somewhat dissipated but really good hearted men of the community looked upon the five struggling churches, with their pushing, energetic ministers as the merchant did. To accomplish much under such conditions was difficult indeed. But these preachers were all Christians. They were all sent out by the Christian church. Their brethren in the East sent the funds to make their work possible. Their churches were founded upon the Word of God. The great denominations with which they were connected

are said to be working most harmoniously together. They claim to be divisions in the same great army. In that mountain region, at occasional union services, they were saying to the people, "We really are one great glorious church." Back comes the retort, "Why not, then, sell four of your buildings, send four of your men elsewhere, and let us have one good, live, flourishing, well-supported, respectable church?"

Such reasoning is found not alone upon the western plains, or among the mountains, but in all parts of the land. Suppose these denominations, as has been said, do stand for some particular and important truth. Can it be shown that it is essential to the well-being of the church, or to the healthy development of genuine religious character? We find about the same kind of prosperity in all evangelical denominations, and it is impossible to determine from a man's Christian character whether he may be a Congregationalist, Baptist, Presbyterian or Episcopalian. If this be true are we justified in claiming that the phase of truth for which any denomination stands, or the peculiar emphasis which it employs, is good ground for the divisions which evidently are estranging many men from the claims of religion? Our course leaves men, all over our land, who have gone forth from Christian homes, to new fields of labor, drifting from the restraints of the old home religion. Denominationalism is in no small measure responsible for the way men drift from their religious moorings out into the spirit of pleasure, business and some type of infidelity. Our denominationalism cuts the nerve of genuine religion, and stays the progress of the kingdom of God. It forces the Christian church to appear in a false light before the world. The Christian community seems to the outside world a wrangling multitude. It is because of this spirit that the church is broken up into a multitude of sections, and each section becomes by force of circumstances an unfriendly competitor of every other. We see this illustrated in every little village in New England, Penn-

sylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, as well as in the farther west. Wherever a little community of 2,500 or 3,000 happens to collect, we will find from ten to fifteen church organizations, weak, struggling, poverty stricken, living out their precarious existence. Under such conditions they are so handicapped that successful religious work becomes an impossibility. East, west, north and south on all sides, in every walk men are asking whether such a course be wise. A spirit of unrest, over such a condition, stalks through the land. We find evidence of this in the increasing demand that there be a coming together of Christendom. Especially from the pagan countries, whither our missionaries have gone, and have been endeavoring to promulgate our differences, comes the decisive demand for Christian unity. The converts of China, Japan, India, and of every mission field are saying that they do not want our differences established among them. They care not for our denominational schisms, but they do desire to have Christianity, and to have it in a single united church. What does the Orient care for Plymouth Rock, or Westminster Abbey? Why should the Occident thrust John Wesley, the Augsburg Confession or the Thirty Nine Articles upon the Orient? The converted heathen care little for our quarrels and jealousies. The attempt to explain these only confuses the mind and restrains the would-be believer. We have been forcing our divisions at home upon these brethren. The result has been no little embarrassment. Our missionaries are forced to explain how it is that while our religion is divided up into as many sects as Buddhism, still it is to be preferred, as it is the only true religion. In mission lands it has been found necessary to pass over our home differences. Our efforts in this have succeeded only partially. In most of the great and important cities, locations of exceptional strategic advantage, in spite of our mutual agreements not to overlap, we find two, three and even more denominations have crowded in.

For these and other reasons, within the last few years

there has been much talk concerning some kind of church union. There is an increasing desire on the part of many to escape the unfortunate confusion at the present existing throughout Christendom. Earnest men are asking, is there not some way out of our difficulty? Some propose to escape the difficulty by some kind of a make-shift. As we cannot secure anything like the organic union of the church, let us attempt to get as near to it as we can and secure some kind of a working federation. The endeavor is to arrive at the point where we can meet and talk over our agreements without falling into a rage, and engaging in a bitter fight. This federation of the churches, it is hoped, will become a kind of Hague tribunal, something like a peace conference, without authority, or the ability to do anything in particular but talk. The hope is that it will bring a period of peace in the realm of religion. We can come together in this, upon what shall be recognized as neutral ground, and compliment each other, and possibly in time, arrive at a measure of understanding. At first our agreement may be to a partial disagreement. We may reach the time when upon certain great show occasions, we may agree to turn out and march in mammoth processions, impressing the unbelieving not only with the greatness of the church but with her unity, as well. We will, in this manner, seek to lead the world to think that we are in reality one. Even on such occasions we need to be handled with extreme care for danger lurks everywhere. Under such conditions, however loudly we may proclaim our unity the world will not believe us. Before we can command the confidence of the unsympathetic world there will have to appear such relations as will justify our claims.

One of the encouraging signs of the times is a growing pressure towards the organic unity of the church. It would seem that the time is ripe for action. In the mission fields some of the great denominations already have come together. Nearly forty years ago, in Canada, the different kinds of Presbyterians coalesced forming

one splendid organization. There is at present in the same country a movement to combine the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists into one church. In our country several attempts have been made to secure the union between two denominations. The Presbyterians and the Cumberland Presbyterians made an effort at union, which while successful, as a whole, left a little handful which refusing to come into the union still styles itself the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. One result of this attempt was to clear the atmosphere and gave to the spirit of union a new impetus.

A study of the present conditions offers much to encourage. Giant strides forward have been taken. Among the laity of the church, and among the people outside the church the trend towards organic unity has become strong. It is the popular thing. As never before men applaud the spirit of fraternity. The disposition to emphasize differences has steadily diminished. Larger generosity prevails in all circles. Emphasis in theology is placed less upon minor questions and more upon the few fundamental principles. Philosophy has a less prominent place in religion than a generation ago. Even denominational loyalty is steadily becoming weaker. We are changing our shibboleths from a denominational watchword to something of a broader spirit. All this gives ground to hope that the time is not far distant when the followers of Christ the King may form one great, glorious body. When we see the desire of so large a company of churches that such a time may come, our hope grows large in the expectation that the day is not far away when the great body of Christ's followers shall be one, even as He prayed. We have the hope that the God of the church ere long will give answer to the prayer of His Infinite Son. In this expectation we have a vision of the glorious Church just ahead, where the disciples shall all be together with one accord, and the Spirit of the Most High shall overshadow them.

CHAPTER II

ADVANTAGES OF DENOMINATIONALISM

THE breaking up of Protestantism into hundreds of distinct bodies, each working independently of all the others appears as a serious weakening of the Lord's hosts. That such divisions should have been brought about by earnest men, believing devoutly in the best type of Christianity, ready to follow implicitly the teachings of the Bible demands that we assume at least that they believed that they were securing some real gains. To-day we are in a position to ask whether the supposed gains have been realized. Has Protestant Christianity actually been made stronger and rendered more efficient through the means of these violent disruptions? Can the Protestant Church of the United States accomplish more for the advancement of the Kingdom of God and the glory of His Son, broken up into over one hundred and forty different denominations, as is the case to-day, than would be possible if all Protestants were marshalled in a single organization? While the Protestants now living may not be chargeable with the responsibility of dividing the church, we may, by our course, become guilty of continuing the unfortunate situation. The fathers divided the church, but we are the only ones who can maintain these divisions in our day. That we may justify our course we must show some very decided advantages due to the present disjointed situation in the church.

It is sometimes claimed that where there exists such differences of opinion upon questions of doctrine and polity as to render a real strong working organic union impracticable, where men differ as widely as they ap-

pear to, if they were brought together in the same ecclesiastical bodies, where they would be led to discuss their differences, necessarily there would arise a conflict of opinions so intense as seriously to endanger the existence of the organization. Were all Protestantism united in one body, we are told that at the first assemblage of any considerable number the seeds of disunion would certainly take root, and within a short time the church would divide. As evidence of this we are directed to the past. While there were fewer divisions at the beginning of Protestantism, denominations multiplied, we are told, because it was found that the peace of the church made such divisions necessary. If this were true at the beginning, when there was such intensity of religious life, that the church could not hold together, may we not conclude that the bringing together in a single organization, requiring subscription to a single creed, such as all could accept, under such an ecclesiastical government as could be received, under present conditions, there would be not only friction, but a decidedly unhappy state? The only outcome, so we are told, would be rapid distrust and disintegration. It would never do to deprive these factions of the liberty of faith and action, which they have so long enjoyed, and bring them under the stiff restraint necessary, were all in a single organization. It would be like depriving those who are free, of their liberty. Because of this it is not unfrequently claimed that we have in fact greater unity in our divided state than would be possible under any system of organic unity.

Many things enter into the consideration of this question. Of course if all were filled with the spirit of love and forbearance, which should abide in every Christian heart, it is admitted, little difficulty would be experienced. We must face the fact, that as yet the church is not filled with this spirit. It is true with us to-day, that the bitterest quarrels of which we know, are church quarrels. Nowhere do we find men so ready to take offence, or to contend so earnestly as when

a religious question is involved. It is at once concluded that the peace of the church can be secured only by our present denominational system. In discussing this question we may say that we find actually existing ecclesiastical organizations where the greatest differences of opinion do exist, yet the organizations hold together, have a vigorous life and enjoy a large measure of peace. In the Roman Catholic Church there are differences of a most serious nature pertaining to the gravest subjects, yet that body goes on undisturbed. Sometimes there appears such dissimilarity of views that it seems impossible that the organization should hold together. But this great organization goes on showing scarcely a ruffle upon the surface. In the Protestant Episcopal Church we find men of the extreme wing of the destructive higher criticism, men who are little, if any less than rationalists, together with others who are as conservative and stiff in their theological convictions as any Calvinist. There are high churchmen, and low churchmen, and broad churchmen, holding views most antagonistic, all within the single organization, yet this great church not only continues to go on and do her work but she is in a highly prosperous state. Are Protestants less truly religious than Roman Catholics? Must we admit that Dissenters are less Christ-like in spirit than the adherents of the Episcopal Church? Is it not reasonable to suppose that the members of the different dissenting churches would be able to live together within one fold, as easily as those holding equally divergent views actually do in some of the Episcopally governed churches? It is shown beyond a question in the organizations actually existing to-day that very great diversity of opinion and belief may exist in the same ecclesiastical body, and that organization not be seriously hindered in her work. If we observe a little more closely we will discover that these organizations which have made room within their bodies for diverse views seem to have less embarrassment, and to live in greater harmony than many smaller and more exactly classified bodies. Unity

can never be made exact agreement in every detail. Any attempt to secure organic unity by an extended credal statement would simply increase friction, and would doom the movement to failure. If one find in the denomination with which he is connected, another subscribing to the same creed holding views which are antagonistic to the creed, there arises the conviction that things are not right. The man is not square. He is false to the obligations of his creed. At once there arises the conviction that he should be disciplined. Suppose, as an illustration, that a pastor in the Presbyterian Church should be found preaching the rankest kind of "Arminianism," there would be trouble. It may be admitted that the man is a Christian, that he has a right to hold, and preach such views, but not as an ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church. Such a course would be disloyal to his ordination obligations. When he entered the ministry of this church he subscribed to its creed, and obligated himself to teach its doctrines. The Presbyterian Church is not only a Christian church but she holds certain clearly defined positions upon various theological questions. It may be true that these questions do not affect materially the salvation or the life of the individual member, yet the church adheres to these, and they are just what divides the Presbyterian from all other churches. If a man believe and teach the doctrines of the Methodist, the Baptist, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian or any other church it is his duty as a square, honest man to connect himself with the church whose doctrines he believes. If he do not do this he is disloyal to his church vows, and is out of harmony with his denomination. Morally he is bound to be loyal to his church. If he cannot conscientiously present the teachings of his church, without any strained interpretation, let him withdraw, and go to the denomination where he can be at home. Because of the strictness with which doctrinal lines are drawn, when we have a multitude of denominations, but little liberty can be allowed. With many de-

nominations, over a hundred and forty among the Protestants of the United States, you readily see theological and ecclesiastical lines must be drawn with a degree of fineness which is exceedingly minute. These lines must make one hundred and forty different kinds of Protestants. If this is to be there must be differences sufficiently marked, so that each denomination may be defined. It is necessary to be able to tell how it differs from the others. If this is not done, in spite of everything denominations will gradually grow indistinct, and there will result confusion. For its own protection, therefore, each denomination defines its positions upon a large number of doctrinal points, and ecclesiastical positions. Loyalty to the church demands that these lines be maintained.

Suppose now, that the ecclesiastical organization have a creed broad enough to include both the Calvinist and the Arminian, or any man who sincerely believes in Jesus as the Divine Son of God, and the only Redeemer through whom men can be saved. It would be possible for men as brothers to differ greatly yet thoroughly retain each other's respect, and each be wholly loyal to the church. In such an organization the Calvinist and Arminian would be no nearer agreed than under the present conditions, yet each being loyal to the credal statement of the church, and understanding each other, knowing that they equally sought the glory of the same God, and were honest and true to their church, they would be able to walk together in the closest fellowship. The creed to which they subscribed would entitle each to hold his particular views upon these subjects. There could be no suspicion of each other. Absolute frankness could exist. There would be no bitterness of feeling. Their disagreement, while real, would be friendly. The position of each in the church would be honorable. There would be no reason why each should not throw the mantle of charity over the other and peace should reign in the church. While to some this may sound very much like the dream of an impractical visionary,

speculator, let us remember that already the dream has assumed tangible form. For centuries in one of our churches we find that practically such a condition has existed. In the Protestant Episcopal Church, Calvinists and Arminians have lived together, and worked peacefully, and are doing so still. In the same organization are found other phases of doctrinal belief, as unlike as we find dividing dissenting denominations, and still a church, closely organized, is able, without embarrassment, to do most effective work. This is sufficient to prove conclusively that great differences of opinion, and very marked divergences in credal belief may exist in the same church organization, and not destroy the efficiency of that organization. As we make the organization narrower, adopting a more definite creed, including more subjects, dealing more in detail with each subject necessarily we force the organization to become more exclusive. As we become more exclusive we increase the zone of controversy. As the zone of controversy is increased the controversial spirit is provoked. To provoke the controversial spirit is to multiply the dangers which threaten the peace of the church. If we make our credal statements sufficiently exacting, including questions in philosophy and modes of administration, we make it necessary that if there be peace there must be divisions and subdivisions almost without number. The broader the creed, the more room will there be for differences of opinion upon matters of secondary importance, and the less likely is there to be friction or inward dissension of a serious nature. The past abundantly illustrates this. As ecclesiastical bodies have become large, and were consequently forced to a more liberal interpretation of their standards, the less frequent have been internal dissension. Experience shows that the smaller, narrower bodies are more frequently disturbed by bitterness of spirit and disrupting dissensions. The very narrowness of the more exacting interpretation and application of Scripture passages, and the principles of government engender feelings of

hostility, which easily run into bitter opposition. It has been true in the past that the small denominations, with extensive inclusive creeds, in which agreement has been required on a large number of points have not been the most peaceful ecclesiastical bodies. Contention rises on matters where there is imperfect agreement, not on those questions on which all agree. The topics of imperfect agreement may be spoken of as the border land, lying just along the frontier of the creed of every church. In the past it has been in this border land, on this frontier where the ecclesiastical battles have been fought.

It would seem from the past that two distinct ideals have influenced the church in the forming of her creed and organization. One has been an attempt to reduce this border land, the region of controversy, by enlarging the creed, and including the region of contention within the creed itself. In this way the circumference of the circle has been greatly enlarged. From the necessity of the case such enlargement has increased the extent of the region adjacent. Enlarging the boundary line enlarges the contact with the outside world. Instead of diminishing the border land such a course materially increases it. The more acres the farmer owns, the more land will lie adjacent to his and the more miles of line fence must be maintained to keep strangers out, and his own in. From this enlarged creed more questions will be called forth, each demanding an authoritative declaration. In the multiplicity of such declarations differences of opinion must inevitably follow, and these tend to disagreement. As an illustration, let us take the case of a political party. Suppose one party decides to have the largest possible degree of agreement on the part of its adherents, and to secure this, issues a deliverance upon every possible question which can affect the government. Standing upon such a platform the party enters upon a political campaign. Suppose to cover all things this party has found it necessary to put five hundred planks into its platform. With reference

to each plank it is found there arises a circle of questions. Suppose there is an average of five questions to each circle. As this party enters the conflict, it finds that there are twenty-five hundred points touching the government upon which it becomes necessary to make a declaration. It is impossible that all of these twenty-five hundred questions should be equally fundamental, or that the entire five hundred, even, should touch the great foundation principles of government. Just look at the border land, the frontier which such a party would have to protect from the attack of its foes. It would be exceedingly difficult to win votes in support of such a platform. So many exposed points where objections could be raised would compel this organization to be always on the defensive. It would also be far more difficult to keep inside the party line those who naturally would assist in fighting the battles. There would be so many places where disagreement among the members of the party might arise that great skill would be necessary to prevent the members of the party from dividing into hostile elements.

Suppose another party should be formed, under different generalship, and it should be determined that in the platform there should be five, clearly defined, fundamental principles of government. It will be far easier for this party to secure harmony within its own ranks, there being so few things upon which agreement is required, than for the other. It would also be very much easier for this party to defend itself from the attacks of its opponents, because there would be so few vulnerable points. The very simplicity of its platform would favorably dispose the minds of men not adherents, or decidedly opposed in its favor. The endorsement of such a platform would be easier to secure, it could be more entirely harmonious than were it much larger. The border land would be exceedingly small. The region of unsettled questions touched by the platform would be far less than with a larger platform. The party with five hundred planks in its platform has

a border land of twenty-five hundred unsolved questions. The party with a platform of five planks, reckoning on the same basis as above, would have a border land of unsettled questions twenty-five in number. The comparison of twenty-five hundred questions and twenty-five will give us some reasonable comparison of the difficulty of working out the larger platform in a harmonious manner. Where but few principles are presented these stand out with greater clearness. Being few, all can be important and their appeal is far more powerful. Where there are so many principles combined they cannot all be equally important and the less important tend to obscure the value of the more important. The party endeavoring to cover so much ground weakens itself. So it is evident that the religious organization which attempts to include and carefully define in her creed all possible truth, and to condemn all kinds of error will so enlarge the border land, so increase her exposed frontier, that to protect herself she must cover an endless number of questions, many of which had they not been placed in the creed, and thus magnified out of their importance would have remained forever in obscurity. From the nature of the case we need not be surprised that more numerous and bitter contentions have appeared in the smaller denominations, which have included in their creeds many details, than in the larger organizations, with shorter creeds, dealing more exclusively with fundamentals.

Another claim, frequently advanced in defence of denominations is that where there are so many separate organizations greater fidelity to religious truth is made possible. Denominations make it possible to place needed emphasis upon different aspects of the Divine truth. For instance as there is such an organization as the Baptist Church it becomes possible for the immersionist to be more loyal to the teachings of the Scriptures as he understands them than under other conditions. This, by some, is claimed as an advantage which the denominationalism of our day secures. A

similar line of reasoning is applied to other doctrines. While at first one may see force in this plea upon closer examination there seems something specious in such reasoning. It appears to assume that there can be but a single honest view concerning the doctrine in question. This makes it necessary to assume that every doctrine which has been given a place in a creed of a Christian church has back of it a clear, unmistakable Scripture statement, so that a man may say, "I positively know that the Bible teaches this thing." In experience we find that this is not the case. There is a possible difference of opinion. Philosophy has often stepped in to determine the interpretation. It is perfectly clear that many conditions have influenced the interpretation of Biblical truth. It is well-nigh impossible not to interpret Scripture so as to harmonize with our philosophical views. Frequently it happens that it is not so much the Bible which determines our doctrinal positions as our philosophy. Suppose we go to the city of Chicago, or to some other large city of our country, and select two clergymen, from all the country, who are recognized by all as scholarly, intelligent, honest, devout men, one a Baptist, who conscientiously holds that the only mode of baptism taught in the Bible is immersion, and the other a Presbyterian. Both are absolutely honest in their positions. Both are equally ripe scholars. Both are prayerful, devout, true Christian men, of the highest type. The Presbyterian denies the position of the Baptist brother. These men are acquaintances, and mutually admire each other. You would be willing to trust to either the destinies of your soul. Let us now bring these men together, furnish them with all the books which either may desire, give them all the time that they may wish, and ask them to sit down together, as Christian brothers, and go over this entire subject, settling forever the baptismal controversy. As scholars, as Christians, let them determine for all time whether sprinkling, pouring, or immersion is the only lawful mode of baptism, or whether all three may be esteemed

equally legitimate. How long, think you, these men, of such fairness of spirit, so distinguished for scholarly ability, and of such humble, devout, Christian character, would discuss this question before arriving at an agreement? Should such an agreement finally be reached which man do you think would most probably win? The very idea of the conversion of either man to the opinion of the other seems preposterous. We are unable to think that the Presbyterian, a man so carefully trained, would be led to the Baptist position. It is hardly supposable that the Baptist brother would come out of the conference agreeing with the Presbyterian. Such things seldom happen. But suppose the Baptist brother should at the close of the conference openly admit that he was convinced that he had been in the wrong, that he recognized that his church had all through her history been mistaken in her interpretation of the Scriptures on this subject, and earnestly recommend that the Baptist Church abandon her position in holding that immersion is the only Biblical mode of baptism, what would his Baptist brethren have to say concerning his course? Would the ministers of that church, and the laymen not feel something of indignation, because this trusted man had proven false to their stand? Or suppose the Presbyterian Doctor of Divinity had been the one to proclaim his conversion, what would his brethren have to say? Is it impossible that his brethren might not accuse him of a surrender? Either man, doubtless, would be discredited in his own church, if not by men of all churches. The fact is that in these doctrinal controversies evidence is not so much the thing sought, as proof that the seeker is right. The struggle is to obtain more plausible arguments to present against those with whom we differ. Take another illustration. We take two men, one a devout, most Christ-like man, a professor in one of our Theological Seminaries, a thorough going Calvinist. The other equally famous, as a devout, scholarly Christian man, from an Arminian institution. We put them together and ask

that they clear up the different views concerning the Divine decrees, and fore-ordination. Is it supposable that they will succeed? It is not argument, not evidence which will bring men together on these points, but philosophy. Should either man admit himself vanquished by the other, and change his position accordingly we would suspect his sincerity. A man's standing as a devout, consistent Christian is in no wise affected by his position as a Calvinist or Arminian. His being a Baptist or a Presbyterian does not change his Christian standing. In the great important questions of genuine religion, such matters are recognized as only side issues. Long since men have ceased to associate such questions with the real character of Christianity. It is recognized that two men starting from unlike philosophical positions will most likely differ in their interpretations of the Scriptures. May we not therefore say that the question at stake is not primarily one of Bible teaching, but of Philosophy? This disagreement, then, is not really an essential part of a man's religion, but of his thinking. The question is not so much one of loyalty to the Word of God as to his philosophical position.

In the denominationalism of our day we have greatly magnified the personal element. Because of this it is safe to say that denominationalism increases decidedly the spirit of contention, and thus becomes a serious hindrance to a fair interpretation of the Scriptures. Take as an illustration, the instruction of the children of a household. We have come to understand by religious instruction that kind of denominational instruction which shall make as certain as possible that the child shall follow in the same denominational connection as the parents. At great pains the tenets of the particular church are presented in a manner to render them dominant in the mind of the child. In doing this some doctrines are enlarged out of proportion while others are minimized. Such a course distorts all true views of the teachings of the Bible. By such emphasis upon certain aspects of truth the child is unfitted to render a fair

judgment later in life. Denominationalism therefore not only fails to develop a spirit which leads to a greater loyalty to the Scriptures, but actually so prejudices the mind, and prejudices the truth, that it becomes exceedingly difficult ever to become a loyal, humble follower of the Word of God. There is engendered such a spirit of stubbornness, a determination to find evidence for certain views, and against other views, that it becomes extremely difficult for the denominationalist to understand the Bible. The more intense be the denominational spirit the greater the difficulty to interpret the Bible fairly. The tendency of denominationalism, in so far as it is successful, is to create and strengthen a prejudice which to such an extent incapacitates the human judgment as to render it incapable of fairly weighing Biblical evidence. It is immaterial of what church we speak, or of what doctrine, the spirit of denominationalism warps the mind in such a manner that it is hopeless to expect a fair consideration of any doctrine involved. It is beyond a peradventure that any Arminian will be just in weighing the evidence which has convinced the Calvinist or that any Calvinist will do justice to the argument of the Arminian. It, therefore, is evident that in actual experience denominationalism, instead of resulting in greater loyalty to the Bible truth, positively obscures that truth. Denominational prejudices seriously interfere with the vision of the man who sincerely desires to find the truth. If we might consider a case brought into the civil courts the decision of which turned upon such a question as the mode of administering Baptism, or the Divine Decrees, or some type of church polity, like the Presbyterian, Episcopalian or the Congregational, the members or adherents of these churches would be debarred from sitting on the jury which should render the decision. If honest, a man would be forced to admit that his conviction on these subjects was of such a nature as to render him incapable of giving an impartial verdict. This would also be admitting practically that his bias,

on any of the doctrines where denominations divide, is so strong as to render him incapable of giving to any of these doctrines a fair impartial consideration. Such a state of mind, the production of such a bias, has been the work of the spirit of denominationalism. It narrows the Christian student, and makes of him a sectarian. Instead of holding a system of doctrine, preëminently Christian, it is Calvinistic, Arminian, or falls under some other shibboleth. Denominations, by making so much of secondary matters, give to these doctrines an importance so out of true proportion as to warp or obscure the exact truth. Because of this denominationalism has been from the first, and must continue to be a real menace to genuine Biblical scholarship. The Presbyterian cannot compare his peculiar creed and church polity with the creed and polity of other churches without instinctively magnifying in some measure such things as seem to justify the position of his own church, and in a corresponding degree belittling the evidence for the characteristics of all other churches. The tendency to do this is intensified by the denominational spirit, and strengthened by the influence of the historic past. The legitimate fruit of denominationalism is sectarianism of a narrow and unwholesome type. The emphasis which a particular church gives to its own distinctive doctrines comes in time among the members of that church to be the important element of church life. This gives the so-called doctrine of the church, that for which the church stands an emphasis which distorts the truth. For this reason the theology of a particular denomination appears deformed. The attention given to a study of the defense of the doctrines of a church, and the weakness of the doctrines of other churches becomes a real misrepresentation of the true doctrines of the Bible. Such a bias is given to the mind of the devout student as to render normal religious development impossible. This kind of Bible study develops a spirit of antagonism, a kind of religious peevishness whose end is discord. The correctness of this reasoning is abundantly illustrated in

every church. Those churches which place greatest stress upon the denominational spirit unconsciously, to a greater extent distort the doctrinal teachings of the Bible. The moment the spirit of defense is aroused there comes up a corresponding spirit of attack. Hostility is engendered, and in the contention which follows without exception those Biblical truths which can be made to strengthen the position of a church are made prominent, while all such as seem to favor something else are depressed. There is the distinct endeavor to strengthen "our side" of the question and at the same time to weaken the side of our opponents.

As this is the trend of denominationalism, it is evident that the stronger the denominational spirit, the greater the loyalty to the denomination, the more decided is the tendency to blind the reason and lead into error. Before his conversion St. Paul was a Pharisee. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of the man either before or after he became a follower of Jesus. We do not question his truthfulness. From his own statement we learn that while a Pharisee he failed utterly to appreciate the arguments which were advanced to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah for whose coming he and his people were devoutly praying. From what we know of the man, we feel sure that he studied the whole field, examining all the arguments, and searching the Scriptures, with great care, and with the result that he became the bitterest enemy of the followers of Christ, the most zealous persecutor of the church. Later in life he showed an equal zeal as a preacher of the Gospel. After this, he tells the Christians of his day that in the early part of his life he verily believed that in persecuting the church he was doing the will of God. It is probable that had it not been for a Divine and miraeulous interposition he would have continued unto the end a bitter enemy of the church. Now if such a state in a man like St. Paul, in so large a measure controlled his mind, so that his sense of truth and error, even of right and wrong, be-

came so unreliable, in so important a matter as the acceptance or rejection of Jesus, as the Messiah, can we reasonably expect that in common mortals its influence will be less? In St. Paul's case we find an excellent illustration of how the sectarian spirit befogs the human mind, and confirms one in error. If such a thing be possible on the part of one so genuinely in earnest in his pursuit of religious truth, then we certainly have occasion to be warned. We need to study with great care that we may find the safest road. It should be our great purpose to remove every obstacle in the way of a profounder, clearer knowledge of God's truth. We should do this in the conviction, that in the degree that the spirit of controversy disappears the light of the Gospel will find a more open entrance, and a deeper, purer, more heavenly spirit of devout religious experience will develop, and the church growing less controversial will be more largely filled with the spirit of Christ, and become the power of God in the salvation of the world.

Originally when a break was made in the church, and a new denomination went off it was in the name of liberty of conscience. It was this which led to the break of the first Protestants with the Church of Rome. It has been this claim of liberty of conscience which has led to all the subsequent divisions. Some one has felt himself aggrieved, and if he had the influence to secure a following has proclaimed abroad that his conscience has been interfered with, that he may worship God in accordance with his own conviction of right and wrong it is necessary for him to go out from the mother church and establish another, a church of his very own. He therefore proclaims his new faith, and invites all like-minded to join with him. It is all in seeking liberty of conscience. This is based upon the assumption that in order to worship the conscience must be free. This seems to be justifiable. When men are compelled to do what they believe to be wrong, contrary to the Word of God surely there should be some way by which they

might find needed relief. The moment that we commence to analyze the situation we grow more doubtful of the justice of the claim. In considering this the situation is so delicate that whatever may be said is liable to misinterpretation. Still there is no more important subject connected with the development of denominationalism, in the grip of which the church writhes to-day, than this same liberty of conscience. Let us examine some examples of it, as it has appeared in history. We will take for illustration instances sufficiently familiar so that we may readily recognize the spirit which permeated the movement.

The Puritan Congregationalists, because of religious persecution, that they might enjoy the liberty of conscience, went from England to Holland, and later sailed for the New World. They landed on the bleak gravelly shore of Massachusetts, at Plymouth, and made their first settlement. They suffered severely from the exposure of the voyage, the horrors of a bitter cold Winter, and pinching want. The Indians were hostile, yet that they might worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, uncomplainingly they endured all things, until they had wrested from the inhospitable wilderness a home. It was liberty of conscience for which they suffered. A few years later there came to Pennsylvania another colony for the same purpose. Among these were men from Holland, Scotland, and elsewhere, all seeking this liberty of conscience. They brought their churches with them. The Puritan, the Quaker, and the Presbyterian. They all worshipped the same God, believed in the same Bible, and trusted for their salvation the same crucified Savior. The most mystical of all, the Quaker, announced his faith in Christ, and worshipped without external forms. The Puritans interpreted the Scriptures in very much the same manner as the Presbyterians. But in those days, the Puritan's conscience, which had forced him to cross the Atlantic, and suffer all things that he might be religiously free, would not permit the Quaker, or even the

Presbyterian, to practice the teachings of his religion in the Puritan's colony. He demanded a strict uniformity. This could not have been for the sake of liberty of conscience. The Puritan worshipped the God revealed in the Bible, as did the Presbyterians. The Prayers, the psalmody and the pulpit teachings differed very little. It is probable that so far as the question of real worship is concerned the Puritan, the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian of those days, could, without any hardship, have all worshipped in the same congregation. Each could have prayed together to the same God. Each with equal profit could have listened to the same Scriptures, read by the same person, from the same place. Had they been so inclined each could have joined in the same hymns of thanksgiving and praise. But no, these men stood for liberty of conscience. What did it really mean? It meant that in one congregation Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs were used, while in another Psalms only. It meant that in one congregation the prayer was extempore, while in the other a liturgy was used, and the prayer was read. It meant that the only part taken in the service of one congregation was in the singing, while in the other a more or less elaborate responsive service, carefully prepared, approved by the church, was used. There was a difference in the manner in which the clergymen were dressed as they officiated in the sanctuary. But they all believed in the same fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures, God, the Trinity, the birth, life, suffering and sacrificial death of Christ. They believed alike in the necessity of faith in Christ as the Saviour of men, the same kind of repentance for sin and the same kind of a holy life. All believed that after death comes the judgment, that there is a place of final, endless punishment of the wicked, and another place where the righteous are eternally blessed. In all that pertains to the real worship of God and man's relation to Him we find there was practical agreement. Every difference was of a nature which did not in the least affect the salvation and character of

the man. Not even was the spirit of genuine worship seriously disturbed by any of the points of difference between the men of that day. As we review the situation, one may well ask in a spirit of seriousness, Was it really a question of freedom to worship God, liberty of conscience which divided the church at that time? Did not the divisions arise from the discussion of matters which have always been nonessential? These questions upon which the church of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries split were really of such little moment that no inspired writer considered it as worth his time to make a clear deliverance upon them. If the inspired writers did not deem such questions of sufficient importance to speak out clearly upon them may not the modern church, as she constructs her creed, just as safely remain silent concerning them? Is it not possible that, without intending it, our modern church leaders have fallen into the same kind of error as did the more ancient religious teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees? They insisted upon the minutest details in the observance of the Law, tithing the mint and annis and cummin, to the neglect of the weightier matters. We fall into the error of demanding a statement of faith concerning the mint and annis and cummin of philosophical speculation and theological controversy, while as in the case of the ancients, the weightier matters of justice and righteousness are lightly passed by. It is easy to see how the religious leaders during the stormy times preceding the advent of Christ, under the impetus of the militant spirit of the age were carried in their religious thinking to an extreme of detail in religious observance. It was fatal to spiritual life. In the militant age in which Puritanism had its rise we can see how under the tremendous stress of the times, certain aspects of religious thought were pressed beyond their bounds. But that age has passed. We have entered upon an era of peace. In civil life this spirit so prevails that conferences are held with the serious purpose of inducing the political powers of the world to abandon war. Re-

formers are pleading for the principle of settling all disputes amicably, by an appeal to some tribunal of justice. At such a time who can justify the church, that body of men who beyond all others puts forth the claim to be followers of the meek and lowly Christ, if she refuse to extend the olive branch of peace and insists upon prolonging the unseemly conflicts of past generations, forcing the church of to-day to keep up the old system of offense and defense that we may gratify some of our inherited opinions? The time surely has come when the church should do some serious thinking, and then act the part, not of hot-headed partisans, but of gentle, loving, generous followers of Jesus. The time has arrived when we should cease to magnify trifles into fundamentals, when we should cease to elevate questions of philosophy to the plain of religious questions of conscience.

CHAPTER III

COMPLICATIONS

WHEN the church first commenced to break up into sections there was a genuine zeal for what was understood to be the truth. It was believed that the church, as she then existed, was in a corrupt, decadent state. On every side it was admitted that fundamental reforms were sorely needed. The men then living, being in the thick of the conflict felt more strongly than we can the need of vigorous action. After the movement had started those in authority attempted to suppress the reforms which had been undertaken. This met with resistance. Both sides were aroused, and soon resorted to extreme measures. Persecutions followed and soon an ecclesiastical crash resulted. Those determined upon repression became very insistent. Those bent upon reform grew more restless and determined to stop nothing short of that which they had set out to accomplish. Ill feeling increased. Attention was concentrated upon the particular thing which they had set out to secure, which served to make more determined the reformers. Neither party was in a state of mind or heart favorable to a fair weighing of evidence. Nothing but extremes could satisfy the reformers, and the other party demanded extremes at the other end. The reformers would have a reformation at whatever cost. The other party were determined to crush out the reformers and to repress the reformation started at any sacrifice. It was inevitable that a split in the church should come. When it came the leaders of the reformation found themselves excluded from the church with neither the time nor the temper to weigh consequences. Hastily forming a new

organization, with the least possible delay they sought to bring this into working condition. This was the start, and this method has prevailed ever since. Some one in the Reformed Church becomes dissatisfied, and is moved to introduce a change into the church. Opposition arises. A split results. The split organizes itself into a new denomination. Consequences are seldom if ever considered. To-day time enough has elapsed to permit such a course to bring forth its legitimate fruit. After three hundred years of this kind of church development it is fair for us to look out over the ecclesiastical world and ask what is the fruit of denomination-ism? A part of this question involves the complications which have resulted from such a course. In the present chapter we will examine some of these. They are the legitimate results of our modern denomination-ism.

Some years ago during a Summer vacation the writer spent several weeks in one of the little villages in the upper Lake region. In walking about the town in company with a friend we found several church buildings. This was no surprise, as we expected to find them. The town had a trifle over 2,000 population. In our day such a community would not be considered as properly cared for, from our Protestant point of view, unless there were several Protestant Church organizations. What did surprise us was finding that the largest, the most expensive and pretentious of all the church buildings of the town was evidently unused. The wooden steps in front were in ruins. The walk was overgrown with weeds, which extended to the very door. The windows were boarded up. The building had every appearance of being deserted, and left to rot down. As it was vacation, we had time to investigate. Going to the landlord of our hotel, a Nova Scotia Scotchman, and an elder in the Presbyterian Church, we enquired concerning the deserted building. This is the story which he told. Not many years before the only church in the village was a Roman Catholic organization, which

had been there from the earliest times. It was organized, first as an Indian church. A new railroad was built, and this village was made one of the terminals. People began to move to town, and an air of thrift characterized the place. In a town several miles distant was a Congregational Church, whose pastor was a young, active, discreet man. Hearing of the situation in this town, he visited the place and was convinced that the improvement was permanent, and that the town had a future. He was also convinced that with the present population there was abundant opportunity for a Protestant Church. Hiring a hall, he arranged for regular services. A Sunday School was formed and the work greatly prospered. The young minister grew in popularity, and a Congregational Church was organized. Help was secured from a mission board and the attractive building, now falling into ruins, was erected. The congregation continued to grow, and the future looked bright. All the Protestants had joined under this pastor, the church prospered, and all were happy. It was but a short time before this organization became self-supporting, paying the pastor a good salary with ease. A few years, two or three, passed, and the pastor, greatly beloved by the people was urgently called to a field in a distant part of the country. It was not long before another man was found, and things looked hopeful. The new pastor did not prove to be popular. He was not judicious in his administration of the organization. The spirit of unrest appeared. For a time there was a disposition to make the most of the situation, trusting that later matters would adjust themselves. The pastor grew more unpopular, and the restless spirit continued. In the congregation was a group of Episcopalians, and like the others, they became discontented. Getting together they talked over the situation, and decided that the time was ripe for the organization of a church of their own. They had never been in full sympathy with the manner in which the services had been conducted, as they missed their much loved ritual.

Now they were uncomfortable under the leadership of the new man. To this time they had loyally supported the new enterprise, but they determined that under such a leader they could do so no longer. They knew that others, like themselves, were dissatisfied and there was the expectation that some of these might join with them, should they start a new church enterprise. Word was sent to the Bishop, who visited them, and the result was that an Episcopal Church was organized. At once a lot was purchased, and with the aid of mission money a new building was erected, though inferior to the one already built. Now there were two churches.

Not long after the second building had been dedicated, another group of men assembled in one of the homes, and determined that the time had come for them to break away and be organized into a church of their own. A Methodist Church was organized, and with the assistance of missionary money, a third building was erected. They were so feeble that they were compelled to be one of a group of churches in supporting a pastor, and their pastor was with them one Sunday in four. They were strained to the last extent to maintain their organization, but it was their own beloved church, in which they had been raised, and they willingly bore the burden. But this was not the end. The pastor continued to become still more unpopular, and a third group assembled in one of the homes to discuss the situation. They decided that they would not continue longer in such an uncomfortable alliance, and determined to withdraw and form a church of their own. Sending for a missionary of their denomination in a short time a Presbyterian Church was organized. The Board of Home Missions sent them a pastor, the Board of Church Erection appropriated some money, and they soon dedicated their new building, and commenced to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. When the Presbyterians went off but two families were left in the original Congregational Church. They were poor and unable to maintain the services of the church.

They could not even afford to keep the building in repair. The pastor was compelled to leave. The only thing which the old organization could do was to close up. The church was doomed to an ecclesiastical death. The two or three members held a farewell meeting, boarded up the building, and went home. We have this situation: The first church building, the largest, most pretentious in the town, before its first coat of paint had grown old, was closed, as we found it on our morning walk. That building stands in the midst of the town, occupying the best location for a church, a silent monument to the folly of our present denominationalism. This is not an incident culled from the history of the seventeenth century, but occurred within the last quarter century. In that town to-day there is not a self-supporting Protestant Church. Had they remained together in the first church organized, long ago they would have become a strong and influential organization, amply able to care for every Protestant in the town. While the town has had a comfortable growth since these churches were organized they all remain poor, and are crippled in their work for the want of funds. Instead of one good strong, respectable church in the town, housed in a really fine building we have three little groups of discouraged Christians struggling with might and main to keep religious services going in three cheap and scantily furnished buildings. Their combined membership to-day is scarcely larger than was that of the original church before the divisions.

Later in the same Summer another place was visited, some distance from the one referred to above, which furnishes another illustration of the strange way in which things come to pass in Protestantism, under our denominational system. Many years ago the Presbyterians had a mission to the Indians located in this place. A place of worship was erected. This was the center of a vigorous religious work. After a time, by the action of the government the Indians were removed to a distant place. As there was no further use for the

building, it was abandoned. Not many years later, the white people began to take up land in the neighborhood of the building, which was in good repair. An itinerant Methodist minister visited the community, and conducted services in this church. Some few repairs were made, and the old building became the home of a little congregation. Within a year or two another change took place, and the people who had settled in this neighborhood moved on. The services were discontinued, and the church was a second time abandoned. For years no services of any kind were held. The community slowly gained in population. A Congregational minister visited the place, and finding a community with no religious services, reopened the old building, and commenced church services. The people rallied about him, and soon started a movement to repair the old building which was at the time greatly out of repair. This was accomplished, and the Minister appeared in the greatly improved building to conduct services, and to his surprise found another minister, a Methodist, before him, who in the name of the presiding Elder laid claim to the building, and insisted upon preaching. The people were disappointed, possibly angered, but the Methodists held the building. The dislodged congregation at once organized themselves into a Congregational Church, and proceeded to erect a new building, near by, concerning the title of which there should be no question. To-day the two church edifices stand in the open country, only a few rods apart. There is no town near. Neither organization has been able to secure a following sufficient to enable it to maintain the worship of God with any regularity, or even dignity.

Let us take another instance, a church in Ohio. The town has, possibly, 700 inhabitants. Some years ago there were two church buildings, one a Methodist, the other a Presbyterian. One building was used by both the Presbyterians and the Cumberland Presbyterians. Originally this building had belonged to the Cumberland Presbyterian people, but for many years it had

remained unused. After a conference with the members of the Cumberland Church, the Presbyterians took the building and thoroughly repaired it, and for many years maintained regular worship in it, the Cumberland Presbyterians joining harmoniously with them. This continued until a Cumberland Presbyterian Minister hearing of the situation, visited the town. Within a short time there was trouble. To settle this it was necessary to appeal to the civil courts. Years of litigation followed which resulted in giving the building to the Cumberland Presbyterians. The years of wrangling had developed to an unusual degree the denominational spirit, and at once the Presbyterians proceeded to erect a church building of their own. This gave three church buildings for the little town of 700 people. The case is aggravated, for since the union of the Presbyterian and Cumberland Presbyterian Churches the Presbyterians have two buildings.

Within ten miles of where the writer now sits is a country town with a population of 300, in which there are three Protestant Churches, each having its separate building. A few years ago the writer was a member of a Committee, sent to a certain town, like many other towns of the central west, at the time having a population of 1,140, with a large Roman Catholic element, and five Protestant Churches. There was little wealth in the place and there was not a single Protestant Church able to support a pastor. The organization which the committee was to look after, only a short time before was seriously considering the advisability of erecting a house of worship, and it was the business of the committee to advise with respect to such a movement. The investigation showed that the organization had a pulpit, a Bible, and seventeen resident members. They were counselled to unite with one of the other churches. If one will look carefully over the country he will find that the average country town has so many church organizations, and so many church buildings that it is impossible for the people to maintain the church service with that

dignity which the cause of religion requires. Why this waste of money and men? We are told by the leaders of our great denominational organizations that such things do not now occur, for a relation of comity has been entered into by the various denominational bodies. Those having in charge the purely mission fields, both at home and abroad, have agreed that they will not interfere with each other in their work. This is hailed as a great advance over the past. This is the way in which it works. A Congregationalist missionary, unless he believes the town is large enough to support two churches, will not attempt to organize a Congregational Church if he find a Presbyterian or a Methodist Church already in the field. Such an agreement is referred to as unmistakable evidence of the prevailing spirit of union. In practical work even this agreement is not always observed.

In the central west there is a little city of about 5,000 population. As in all cities of this size, there is a flourishing Roman Catholic Church. Besides this there are four other churches, of large membership, well housed, and supporting themselves splendidly. It would seem that any reasonable man could find a spiritual home in one of these. These churches afford a variety of theological belief, such as Calvinistic, Arminian, and the like. Whatever views a man might hold, one would think that in one of these churches he would be able to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. But this seems a mistake. While the Baptists could find in the Church of Christ a people agreeing with them concerning the mode of baptism, having practically a Congregational polity, still for their peace of mind, that they may feel at home, they must have a church of their very own. With mission help an organization has been effected, and they go forth as valiant warriors of the Lord. Another little company thought there was something wrong with the five Protestant churches now existing, and that they might worship God according to their conscience, they went into the

city park, held "revival meetings," and a Free Methodist Church was organized. Missionary help was given, and a new building was erected. Because they were so poor it was necessary to put their church on a back street, a little cheap chapel. The pastor preaches in this and two other churches, and the balance of his living he secured as a paper-hanger.

Following this came a break in the United Brethren Church. A little company of three or four families were displeased that this organization should retreat from her former position and so far modify her law as to permit her members to belong to secret societies. A minister not far away learned of the situation, and hastened to the town, conducted a "revival meeting," in which it was said the spirit of God was mightily present, and at once a Radical United Brethren Church was organized. Part of the money came from outside, and the rest was begged in the town. This made seven churches for a town of 5,000 people. But that men might worship with a clear conscience more churches were necessary. There were persons without any church home. These zealous souls, while worshipping in the various churches were not content. They longed for a spiritual life not found. So they hired a hall, conducted revival meetings, secured a Superintendent, and went on to a spiritual state attainable in no organized church. The Christian Alliance had come to give the greater liberty to those spiritually oppressed. Every few months they start up "revival meetings" and by such means seek to keep themselves in Divine favor.

There are in this town factories employing a few persons. The population is not stationary, and only a portion of this element attends church. But few of the poorer class is ever brought to the service of the church. About this time an officer of the Salvation Army visited the town. Collections came so easy and abundant that he decided that it was a good location for his work. He hired a hall, brought out his bass drum, and with three or four comrades commenced to parade the streets.

They stopped on the street corners, sang and gathered a crowd and began to preach. By almost superhuman efforts they succeeded in maintaining their services, and paying the rent for the hall, which they hired. The four original churches continued to do their work. They were sufficiently strong that the outside spectacular demonstrations did not affect them. Though their progress was retarded, they continued to make steady gains.

After a time a Lutheran Minister, from a town twenty miles away made an effort to gather the Germans, and organize them into a Lutheran Church. The Germans were a thrifty, industrious, intelligent class of citizens, and having already found homes in the other churches they could see no good reason why they should have a church of their own. They refused to change their church relations. They considered it more to the glory of God, and the honor of religion for them to remain, and work with the churches already on the ground, giving added strength to these, than to form themselves into a feeble, struggling Lutheran Church.

From a neighboring city a clergyman of the Episcopal Church came to town and visited the families of the city. At once he commenced to conduct services according to the ideals of that church. In time fourteen Episcopalians were found, and that they might be spiritually fed, the services of this church were commenced. For twelve or more years this was continued. The expenses were practically all paid from mission funds. The mission was organized into a church, with fourteen members. This organization needed a home, and a lot was purchased, and the struggle began to secure funds to erect a house of worship. The effort proved for the time unsuccessful.

The Lutherans, who failed years ago, could not give up so promising a possibility. Having in mind their former mistake, this time they did not consult the Germans of the place, but announced Lutheran services in the City Hall, which during the Summer months they could secure, free from cost. A minister came twenty

miles, and returned every Sabbath afternoon and conducted services and preached. He visited the German families, and appealing to their national spirit he sought to persuade them to leave their churches, where their fellowship had been so pleasant, and help form a Lutheran Church. For months this effort was persisted in but the Germans were obstinate, and the venture failed.

Many years ago an Adventist Church had been organized several miles out in the country, and a building was erected. As the adherents of this organization diminished, it was decided to move to town, and enter into competition with the other churches. They moved, and brought their building with them.

The situation at the present time is about as follows: The four original churches, strong, aggressive, well organized and manned are doing good work and making steady progress. The other organizations are struggling along, some of them receiving help from mission sources, all doing their best to win members. With difficulty they maintain their numbers. They seek to do this by drawing from the other churches.

We have given briefly the ecclesiastical history of this little city. It is typical of many other similar cities. Yet this city is known as an exception in not being over-churched. Similar things are going on to-day all through the country. In any city west of the Alleghenies the reader without doubt could furnish ease after ease similar to those mentioned above. But despite all this we are told that there is a spirit of comity among the churches. It does not prevent this unseemly crowding in. It is true that under such conditions our boasted spirit of comity is at this moment being ignored. While such situations may not be so common in New England, and the older sections of the country, still they exist there. The process which we have just described is going on in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and the states farther west and south. Churches which have long existed are often weakened and financially embarrassed by

this crowding in process. The unseemly scramble brings the churches to grief, and discredits the cause of religion. The city which has been described, of five thousand population and nine churches, is often spoken of by Christians as an exception to other cities of its size in having so few churches. In the same state and not many miles distant is a little county seat with 3,000 population, without any important manufacturing interest, a population largely made up of retired farmers and their families, which has sixteen different churches. This leaves less than 190 men and women and children to each individual church. Take another town, which can be duplicated hundreds of times, with a population of 900 and three churches. There is another with a population of 300, and this place has three churches. But we need not continue the citation of such unnecessary multiplication of churches. Instances exist in nearly every town. In the cases mentioned extremes have not been sought, but such instances as well illustrate the situation. In this country there are thousands of towns with a population less than twelve hundred with from three to six church organizations. Such undue multiplying of churches results in all sorts of embarrassing complications. Pastors believe themselves forced to resort to every conceivable device by which to build up diminishing church attendance. In the Sunday Schools prizes are offered to those who will bring in most new scholars. In some instances the school will be divided into two parts, each part given some name like the "Reds" and the "Blues," and they compete in securing new scholars. For weeks the contest goes on. At last the end comes, and one side wins. A banquet is given by the defeated side, banners are presented, and various honors are heaped upon the winners. These contests are conducted in towns which are crowded with churches and Sunday Schools, and the results are usually unfortunate. Here is a town of 900 people, with three churches and three Sunday Schools. At the close of such a contest one school reported an

attendance of six hundred. This school claims a membership within 300 of the entire population of the town. Where did she secure the hundreds of new scholars? Ask the pastors and Superintendents of the other two churches and schools. In a somewhat larger town, the pastor started a Bible class. He organized a little handful of men, divided the town into sections, and assigned his men for work. They went out to bring members for the class. Names were given to them, and they commenced their labors. The men gave personal invitations, the pastor wrote letters, asking men to "visit" and see his class, reporting that he was doing a great work. Week by week the city paper was used to proclaim the marvelous attendance of men upon this class. For months this was continued with undiminished energy, and at last it was reported that the men's class numbered over five hundred. His church at the time numbered about four hundred. Does some one ask where he found his men? From those who attended church nowhere? No, they came from the other congregations. The men of this church boomed the class and sought every man who could be reached. The other schools of the town were depleted, only the loyal "stand-bys" remained. It was but a short time before this inflated class commenced to shrink, and finally reach a normal condition. One result of this movement was that the entire Sunday School population of the city was demoralized, and several years of hard work were required before it could be brought into a normal healthy condition. But this was not the most deplorable result. The scheme worked so well that another school in the same town, having suffered somewhat severely from the contests, sought some means of regaining its loss. A contest was entered into with another school, of the same denomination, in another city. A new struggle commenced. The entire school and church entered the lists, and ere long this organization had regained the numbers lost, and began to draw from other churches. Many children who had been attending some

school with a greater or less degree of regularity were gathered in, many of them from families already members of other churches. This struggle raised the membership of the school to something over three hundred. During the time of the contest the interest in this church increased, the congregations grew, and the future brightened. The pastor considering the time opportune commenced a "revival," hoping by this means to anchor some of the strays he had caught. The movement was deemed eminently successful, and the church and its pastor received the congratulations of their friends. A few months later, one of the other schools, smarting under its losses during the two contests just finished, quietly organized itself into two hostile camps, the "Reds" and the "Blues," and set out on a determined campaign of its own. As in the former instance, the side winning was to be banqueted by the losers and to receive a banner. Everything which could encourage, or arouse the workers, was done. Reports were made at regular times, which were employed to spur on both sides to more strenuous efforts. The pastor and superintendent made speeches, in which they sought to increase the zeal. Persons from outside were invited to be present at various times, and hear the reports and address the "workers." The enthusiasm ran wild. Old and young, even in the primary department every one was fighting in a frenzied effort to win. A few children who possibly up to this time had failed to attend any school were reached. The other schools were again raided. Every boy and girl pleaded with other boys and girls of other schools to come long enough to be "counted." Playmate prosecuted playmate, until there was compliance. Men and women were invited to "visit" the school and at once were enrolled as members, in the hope that by this means some of them might be persuaded to remain. Again the local papers teemed with news concerning "the great Sunday School movement." The growth of the school was phenomenal.

But we must not go on. There is really no end to this

kind of work. The instances referred to are not ideal, but descriptions of what actually took place in a single city, and the writer had first-hand knowledge of them. We could indefinitely multiply illustrations. From what has been given we see the nature of the work. We are told that there is a spirit of comity among the churches. The churches joined in "Memorial Day Services," "Union Thanksgiving Services," and pastors exchange pulpits. Churches unite in special services. It has come to be customary to speak of the unity and the wonderful harmony which prevails among our churches today. There is such a spirit of concord among the denominations. "What more could we have were we a single denomination?" A wonderful change has come over the different denominations. No longer do we denounce each other from the pulpit, even in smooth ecclesiastical terms, but as never before set ourselves at work deliberately plotting how we may take away from the other denominations and build up our own. Our growth may weaken our competitors, and embarrass our rivals, but our church must grow, and to do this we must get the people. We will go at this devoutly, conscientiously, prayerfully, but we must have the people, even if they are content in other churches.

Enough has been said to indicate in some degree the nature of the spirit of denominationalism which in spite of our boasted "comity" pervades our church work. With all our spirit of comity, with all our brotherly love, with all our fellowship and co-operation, we find among our greatest embarrassments in Christian work, not skepticism, immorality, heathenism, unbelief, worldliness, but the complications which grow out of our unfortunate ecclesiastical divisions. The host of the Lord has been divided against itself, and sad, sad is the consequences.

CHAPTER IV

CONFLICTS

IN addition to the complications which are constantly arising because of denominationalism, in which there is no direct purpose to embarrass other churches, there is another class of interferences of a very different nature. It is a sad truth that a church of one denomination will deliberately plan a battle royal with a church of another and competing denomination. The un concealed purpose of gaining an advantage is too evident to be misunderstood. Not unfrequently this occurs under conditions which make it clear that for one church to win will greatly embarrass the defeated organization, if not completely blot it out of existence. In one of the New England States some years ago there was a wealthy farming community, respectable, and church-going. In the center of the township were a store, post office, and four or five dwellings. Many years before the people had organized a Congregational Church, erected a good typical building for the times, purchased a parsonage, and engaged a minister. As there was but a single organization they were able to give their pastor a good comfortable support. Years passed, and ministers came and went. The organization became strong and was a blessing to the community. Nearly all the families within reach became connected with this organization. The church was considered highly prosperous. A minister, who had done good work, was called to another field, and moved away in the late Summer. Some months passed, until in the early Winter, before a pastor had been secured. Divisions, in the organization, had never appeared, and few families moved away. There

had been a recent change of two farms, where loyal Congregationalists moved away and two ardent Methodists took their places. These attended the church like other families, but as Winter approached, and they had no pastor, these two men saw their opportunity. Going to a neighboring town, they talked over the situation with the pastor of the Methodist Church. He communicated with the official who at the time was called the "Presiding Elder," who took the matter under advisement. A week or two later a noted evangelist of the Methodist Church visited in one of these families. There was no preacher at the church for the day, and as this famous gentleman was to remain over the Sabbath, arrangements were made for him to supply the pulpit. The people were pleased with his services, and here the matter would have ended. The two men, by whose invitation the evangelist had come, had further designs. One proposed that this man who "happened to be resting from his labors for a couple of weeks," and so was free, should be engaged to conduct some special meetings. Some of the church did not care for the kind of "revival meetings" proposed, but these two families were so zealous that finally it was arranged. The "revivalist" should remain two weeks, preaching every night. He remained not only two weeks, but six. Being a man of popular gifts, he won many of the people as friends. At the end of the six weeks, as he had no other engagements, it was proposed by one of these men that he be invited to remain until the Spring meeting of Conference, when he would receive an appointment for the coming year. To gratify these families, and as there was no Minister engaged, he was engaged as a supply for four months. Spring came, the Conference met, this "evangelist," with the two Methodist men, attended, and he was assigned to this field. On his return there was opposition, and the discontent became so marked that, had it not been for his judicious management, there would have been an outbreak, but after two or three years things quieted down. This staid old Con-

gregational church was now enrolled as a Methodist Church, and pastors were regularly assigned to the place. The old Congregational community had been captured. It was the conviction of the outside non-churchgoers that there had been a deliberate plot, and that those engaged in it accomplished just what they sought. The Congregationalists had been outgeneraled. That, we are told, was over forty years ago, when there was a more bitter competition than in these later and more Christian times. Since then there has been developed the spirit of comity and brotherly love. To-day such a thing could not happen. We are told that the spirit of co-operation has removed the old-time antagonisms. Then it is suggested that even at that remote time such occurrences must have been rare. While they may have been rare, such things did actually occur. No railing accusation need be brought against the Methodist Church for what took place, for had the opportunity offered other denominations would, doubtless, have pursued a very similar course.

There is a little country village where the writer frequently visits, which in 1910 had a total population of 314. Three Protestant churches are trying to give the people of this hamlet the Gospel. A couple of years ago one of the churches secured a pastor who had the reputation of being a pushing, energetic man, and to a marked degree popular among the people. To this time the church which secured him had been the weakest in the community. Shortly after he commenced his labors the members of one of the other churches noticed that some of their members who formerly were constant in attendance were now rarely present. The evening service was especially small. A quiet investigation was instituted and it was discovered that the missing members were in the congregation of the new pastor. To meet the emergency, counter attractions were attempted, but the falling off continued. The situation began to grow embarrassing. It became evident that if they would save the church something must be done, and there was

no time for hesitation. The pastor, a most excellent godly man, who had served the church for some years with perfect satisfaction to all, and great profit to the church, found himself in an embarrassing position. His church was being depleted. The faithful ones were growing restless. The situation threatened to become desperate. Only one way seemed to promise relief, so, greatly to the regret of all, the pastor decided to resign. A careful search followed until a man was found who had the reputation of drawing large congregations. Furthermore he was a successful organizer. He was called, and to secure him a substantial increase was made to his salary. The new man appeared. He proved to be a preacher of unusual power, and very soon his congregations commenced to grow. Being the newest man in the field, he had an advantage over his competitors. The floating element began to attend his church. He commenced his schemes of organization, and ere long he had gained back those whom his church had lost, and had them all at work. This not only reclaimed his own, but brought many others. The growth of his church was rapid, and became the subject of common conversation. He drew from both the other congregations.

Up to this time the third church had remained content to do her legitimate work. She lost largely in attendance. First members of the congregation went to one church, then to the other. Her regular congregations were becoming smaller continually. The financial situation grew threatening. They also must make some move to reclaim lost ground. Conference met, and a delegation from the congregation was sent to present the situation. They had no fault to find with their pastor, but the situation demanded a change. They must have a man able to stop this exodus and to turn the tide towards them. This was the only thing which could restore their financial equilibrium. They must win back those lost and gain others. They demanded a man who not only could hold his own, but draw from the other congregations. The officials of the conference,

familiar with the present-day methods of church development, grasped the situation at once, and selecting a man such as was desired they appointed him to the field. For the first three months after he took charge of his work he wrought havoc in the community, and demoralized the congregations of the other churches. A great boom appeared on the point of visiting this congregation. The other pastors and their officials were desperate. The man who had been longest in town rose to the situation, and entered upon a line of skillful advertising. The most startling themes for sermons were selected, and popular curiosity was appealed to. It was a success and the crowd began to move back to his church. It looked as though he would win not alone what he had lost, but much more. His competitors were aroused, and his supremacy was not to remain long undisputed. Minister No. 2 was by far the ablest man of the three. He quietly entered his study, and went to work upon a series of sermons upon popular topics, throwing his whole power into them. They were a success. He won back his congregation, and many from the other churches became regular attendants at his services. While he was preaching these sermons the house was packed, and they were the talk of the town. By this time minister No. 3 was aroused and, becoming conscious of the necessity for heroic action, commenced on a new tack to win the crowd, and for a time it looked as though it would succeed. Here a new and unforeseen element was thrown into the conflict. Pastor No. 2, recognizing the difficulties before him, brought to town an evangelist, with two helpers. This turned the crowd his way, a number of wavering persons were brought to a decision, and at once connected themselves with this church. This gave him such an advantage that to the present time he is holding it.

This is not a situation of thirty years ago. It is a tragedy at the present time in process in hundreds of little towns all through the middle west. It is at this hour progressing in one of our older communities, and

the final issue is as yet uncertain. No man can tell what the outcome of such methods will be. Externally there is comity, and apparently a most cordial relation. The pastors are friendly, visit back and forth, and interchange pulpits. The members of these churches speak with pride of the spirit of brotherhood existing in the community. No pastor makes any attack upon the methods or teachings of the others. Outwardly there is no show of fight, but inwardly there is war to the death. For any one of these three churches to grow means that the others must lose. There is no other possible course in such a community. Two men were sent to that town by their conferences in the hope that they would build up their particular church, and thus weaken one or both of the others. The other man was invited to his church because he was believed able to draw members from the other congregations. In a community of 314, including men, women and children, with three congregations, it is evident that the only way for any one of the three to increase in strength is to take from one or both the others.

Take another instance. It is a church which exists, and all that will be said concerning it occurred within the last seven years. It is a community with a single church. In the little village are two or three stores, a grain elevator, a railroad station, and a small manufacturing enterprise, which for a few months of the year employs three or four men. There may be a dozen dwellings in town. For twenty or more years there had been but one church in the village, which accommodated the surrounding country as well. A comfortable and suitable house of worship has been erected, and is free from debt. With varying success this organization has carried on the work. While it has on several occasions been attempted, until the present no other denomination has been able to secure a place in town. Two miles distant is another village with three Protestant churches. The families of this vicinity were not all originally of the same denomination as the church. A few years ago

there was trouble with the pastor. He went away and another man was secured. He remained a little over a year, and because of some differences he went away. The church being feeble could not command a strong man for the pulpit, and it required time to find one who was acceptable. It happened that one of the officers had been trained in another denomination. The first the church knew this good brother had introduced a man connected with his old church, who lived a few miles distant. This man agreed to preach for less than half the salary which they had been paying. After some delay the man decided to come, and arrangements, at his suggestion, were started to transfer the church to another denomination. The denomination to which the preacher belonged would take the organization with its building. Now it so happened that the Board of Church Erection of the denomination with which the congregation had always been connected held a mortgage on the building for several hundred dollars. If the congregation went to another denomination this money, according to terms on which the money was given, must be paid. This fact, and this alone, saved the splitting of this little church. There were some who would have remained faithful to the old organization. Now in this instance one denomination did not attack the other in open warfare, but a cunning move was made to secure an organization, and transfer it from its own denomination to another. In all these cases we find what has been termed, it would seem with a cruel irony, "friendly competition." All these things were done in the most friendly spirit, and "for the honor of the Gospel" and "the glory of God." Let us also bear in mind that in 1914 these things were taking place.

Occurrences similar to the instances which have been given are so common that the mere relation of the circumstances seems trite and commonplace. Any clergyman who has had several years' experience can duplicate each instance several times. We find cases of this kind in New England, where one would suppose a more

settled situation would be found, in the middle west, in the mountain States, and on the Pacific coast. The men who are involved in these struggles are more deserving of pity than blame. The denominations have been struggling for the right to exist in these communities. The struggle has not been a characteristic of any one denomination. It belongs to the system. It is inevitable that there should be a spirit of loyalty to one's church. The man in charge of the extension of a denomination must feel an obligation to his church to be alert and grasp every opportunity, that he may enter new openings. If a new community starts, at once there appears an official of some church, a Sunday School is organized, a preaching station is opened, and the field is supposed to be pre-empted. It may be possible that because of the lack of funds no more can be done than to hold the field. This even is not sure, for if the field be one of promise it will not be long before the officials of another organization will appear and commence foundation work. As the community grows, other denominations are sure to enter, and for years there will be a cramped, financially embarrassed effort on the part of half a dozen organizations to do what one could do far better. It is not unfrequently the case that after years of struggle, and the expending of no insignificant sums of money, one or more of the organizations is forced to give up the field and withdraw. The conflict has been too severe, and they have been worsted. Such struggles have not been confined to the outskirts of cities and large villages. We do not find such conflicts alone upon our frontiers, but in the old and established communities as well. We see the life of many an organization strangled, and the possibility of doing successful work doomed forever, by the excessive competition thrust upon it. To illustrate, there is a county seat, with a population made up largely of retired farmers. The denominations have crowded into this place because it has been considered as a good center. This has continued, until to-day it has so many churches that if the

population were divided equally among them all there would be just 190 persons, men, women and children, for each individual organization. For years there has been a standstill in the population. If any one of these churches make any real advance some other church must lose. Such small congregations make it necessary that the income must be small. The pastors must receive small salaries. To meet the financial necessities the congregations are always under embarrassment. The ministers are pinched. The buildings get out of repair, the janitor work is poorly performed, and the buildings are not clean nor attractive. It is not strange that the young men of the community are not attracted to such places. They visit the various lodges and find these halls well furnished, clean and comfortable. They hear no pleas there for money. The lodge is not constantly studying new schemes to raise money, to pay rent, or for light and heat. The contrast is painful. The church with fairs, sales, concerts, lectures, chicken dinners, and similar devices appears before the community like a pauper. The building grows dilapidated, the carpets are worn, the windows are dingy, the minister's salary in arrears, and it is hardly expected that it will all ever be paid. All this serves to give to the young man the impression that the church, with the religion which it proffers, is an old-time, out-of-date organization, and is really in its death throes.

Now what is in a large measure responsible for this condition? There can be but one answer, denominationalism. It is this crowding in of organizations, the over-churching of towns, the unholy contest for the life of a church organization, which loosens the grip of religion upon many a young man as he goes out into the world. The brunt of the battle is not aimed at saving lost souls, it is a fight for men and money that the organization may exist. This kind of competition is so keen as to cut to the quick. In the growing sections of the country we see this conflict with its repulsive features. In the older sections are silent but sad re-

minders of battles fought. The monuments of the sin of denominationalism, in the form of church edifices, falling to decay, rear their heads on all sides. It is doubtful whether there be a town, of any size, in all our land where the denominational fight is not so severe as to make it necessary to resort to extreme measures to carry on the work. Suppose one of the congregations in a town decide to erect a new building? The rule is that the town, not merely the congregation, will be canvassed. Business men connected with other churches, who are already burdened, are forced to contribute to the new enterprise, and thus to assist in strengthening an organization which in so far as it succeeds weakens their own church. The merchant is asked for a contribution on the ground that "our people trade with you." The doctor, lawyer, dentist, all classes of men, are approached and told that "you receive patronage from our people, and you ought to aid us in paying for our church." The man may have no especial interest in the church in question, but as a matter of business he is made to feel that it will be to his advantage to contribute generously. Church after church makes the rounds making their demands, severely taxing the business of a community. If a man do not contribute to these competing organizations he may have it intimated to him that a given denomination will carry its business elsewhere. This is an implied boycott. This is little less than a most mischievous kind of blackmail. There is no country in all the world so severely taxed to support religion as the Protestant Churches of America. A large part of our heavy tax serves to increase our embarrassment.

Let us take an illustration. The citizens of a community are poor, and it is not easy to maintain an organization. By great effort they support their pastor, meeting the necessary running expenses of the congregation. After a few years, the debts are being paid off, and there is a prospect of better times. Scarcely have they felt the relief when a man of another denomina-

tion enters the town, finds half a dozen, possibly a few more, who have belonged to his own denomination, among them one or two families of prominence. They "must be served." He secures a place and appoints a service and sends for a preacher. Once in two weeks he continues to preach. In the other church trouble commences. It is possible that the pastor has not always been perfectly satisfactory to all the members. A few of these drift into the new organization, and soon become members. The new church must have a place of worship and application is made to a mission Board for assistance. The heathen, who are in darkness, must wait, until the great denomination can turn aside and build a house for their brethren, here in the home land, so that they may not stray away into other folds. Every man in the town is canvassed, and finally a second house of worship is completed in a community where there are not people enough to fill the first. Every one feels that it is a mistake, but it is the way in which things are done, so remains quiet. The business men of the community know that the building is not needed, that the spirit pushing it is purely sectarian, and not to be considered narrow, and bigoted, they must respond and give something. On both buildings there is a debt, and to provide for these the women of both congregations commence money-raising. They give oyster suppers, peddle aluminum ware, perfumery, soap, and give fairs, to pay off the debt. Two weak centers of religious influence have been established. Two men are set to a work which one could do better. There commences the struggle for clothing, food, a few books, and a hope that the Lord will open the door to a living salary. It finally becomes necessary for each man to divide his time with another community in a similar condition. By a spirit of comity they have so arranged that only one man conducts a service in the town at a time, and they have preaching each week. The work is divided between two leaders, with unlike plans, different methods, and two sets of organizations. Confusion is thrust into the re-

ligious life of the community. Fruitfulness is impaired.

After a time a man of some wealth moves into the community. Two or three new families appear. They happen to be connected with a denomination not represented in the town. The wealthy man, with a generous spirit, and a zeal for the kingdom of God, rents a hall, and a minister of his own church comes and conducts services. After some months a church organization is effected. In a short time a new church edifice is erected and dedicated to God. A new pastor is needed, and shortly is on the field and we have three fully equipped churches in the town. In the same spirit of comity as is elsewhere manifested, the time is so arranged that there is a service in each church once in three weeks, and a church service in the town every Sunday. From this time on, each church has one-third time of a pastor. There is scarcely any increase in the population since a single man in a single church ministered to the community. Then the organization was supported, but with some difficulty. There was a dignity to the church, and everything was moving on hopefully. Now with three organizations, with three centers, three distinct methods of work and one-third of the time of three different men, each church is weak, and by a hard struggle leads a precarious existence. All are hampered for money, there are few competent to lead, and under the conditions nothing beyond the simplest Sabbath services can be attempted. There was room for the first church. There was material for leadership for one church. The people were able to care for the financial needs of a single organization. Each church which came after the first was bound to draw its members from the church already on the ground, and its organizers knew it. For the second and third churches there could be no possible growth except by preying upon the first. The result was inevitable. Instead of one fairly strong, efficient organization, able to do its work well, and easily to provide for the religious needs of the entire community, we have three struggling to gain some advantage over the sister

organizations. It was inevitable that confusion and discord and a secret kind of internecine strife should enter the religious community. It is almost a miracle if sooner or later disaster does not result. Why? Because of the mutual interference of so-called religious organizations in each other's effort to advance the kingdom of God. On board a man of war such a course would be called mutiny. In an army it would be nothing less than treason. Under our denominational system it is called religious enterprise. While the three churches are striving to serve the same Lord, while they profess to preach the same Gospel, and to build up precisely the same kind of Christian character, they are in appearance, before the world, and as an actual fact, in conflict, and each one is really interfering with the work of the other two. With the three their work is hampered, their buildings are out of repair, their pastors are discouraged and the people unnecessarily burdened. It is inevitable that there should appear evidence of a religious decline. There is an annual unseemly scramble of "revival meetings," "money-raising contests," "personal work" campaigns, and whatever gives slight promise of some temporary advantage over the other two competitors.

This is an experience not of a single town, but of hundreds of them all through the country. The picture is a sad one. We may talk blandly concerning the spirit of brotherhood, laud our comity and fellowship, but until we are able to behave ourselves as servants of Christ and to live together in one organization peaceably, the outside world will have a justifiable doubt concerning the sincerity of our protestations. It is doubtful whether the church has anywhere as great a foe to contend with as our denominationalism. This kind of conflict divides, weakens, and even thwarts the efforts of God's people. There appears in it a zeal so unlike the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus. We have progressed so far in a certain direction that with something of a patronizing air we look upon those two apostles who

would forbid those who differed from them the right to preach. We say, in the spirit of comity and brotherly love, yes, they may all preach, but we will force them out of our organization, and will do our best to render null and void their every effort. We seem to forget that by this spirit of division we really attack Christianity itself. If, as we are told by those who would justify denominations, that we are one, if, as they tell us, there is a real unity, so with some measure of reason we may all be said to belong to the same household of faith, does it not look very much as though our household were divided against itself? The question is, with such divisions will we be able to stand? Are such conflicts reasonable? Are they necessary? Can they be justified?

CHAPTER V

HARDSHIPS

SOME years ago the President of a prominent eastern college, in a sermon preached in a neighboring city, is reported to have used the following language: "In too many places churches have been erected, a number entirely beyond the needs of communities now and for a long time to come. Many are living at a poor dying rate, and it would be better if five thousand of them were burned and if the people would get together in one large church. By so doing the cause of Christ and humanity would be far better conserved." While this is strong language it is not the idle assertion of one who has not carefully weighed the significance of what he is saying. The speaker, a man of mature years, a prominent clergyman in one of the leading denominations of the country, a man of recognized scholarship and known as a conservative both in theology and methods, after years of experience as a pastor and educator, was in a position which should entitle him to speak with a measure of authority. This man declares as his deliberate sober conviction that if in this country five thousand church edifices should burn down, and not one of them ever be rebuilt, the "Cause of Christ and humanity would be conserved." The point which we would hold in mind is this, that there is such a surplus of church edifices and organizations in this country that true religion suffers because of it. In the excessive multiplying of religious organizations there is forced upon the people a real hardship.

First, there is hardship because of the unnecessary expense involved in the erection of these buildings. There

is an annual unnecessary expense involved in the keeping of these unnecessary buildings in repair. There now comes to mind a county seat in Ohio, like hundreds of others in the country, with a population of retired farmers, a few merchants, the employees in a grain elevator, and two or three small factories. This town has sixteen churches. The largest church is the Roman Catholic. If we divide the three thousand population equally among the organizations there would be just 188 men, women and children to each church. Suppose we allow three persons to a family. This would give to each organization less than sixty-three families. Every sixty-three families in the city must erect a church building in keeping with the place, and keep this building in repair. The population must build sixteen church edifices, and keep them in repair, where one would serve the purpose better. We assume that in each of these sixty-three families one person is the bread earner of the household. This gives the real situation to be that every sixty-three men in that community must combine, erect a church, keep it in repair, either buy or rent a house for the home of their pastor and his family and maintain the pastor and his home. Remembering now that in most families the income is but little in excess of what is needed to house, feed and clothe the family, giving the children an opportunity to secure a rudimentary education, and the gravity of the situation becomes apparent. The church tax necessary to maintain such a situation is nothing short of oppressive. When we enter smaller towns and villages we find the burden is very much heavier than in little cities of three thousand people. Take a little place of from one to three hundred population with three and four Protestant Churches and the burden is increased. Our country is full of such places. It is almost impossible to find in the United States a single village of a hundred and fifty persons with less than two or three church edifices. When we take the situation as it exists all through the country, the thousands of these little towns, and the tens of thou-

sands of church edifices, then remember that not half the population of the country is connected with either the Protestant or Roman Catholic Church, we gain some idea of the tremendous financial burden which is borne by the Protestant denominations. The gross amount which has been put into church buildings by these various denominations is certainly sufficient to justify the assertion that this type of religious propaganda subjects the people to a real hardship. Any other tax of such a nature would cause the people to rise up in arms. This, however, is a voluntary tax, and being in the name of religion is borne. In all heathenism we find nothing to be compared with this.

After the buildings are erected and the original cost met, then comes the constant drain of keeping them in repair, and maintaining religious services. These buildings must be lighted, warmed, and a pastor must be provided. The expense of the buildings and their care is so great, that in a large number of instances the expense of a pastor is given up as too heavy. It has become an impossibility. This has led churches to seek to join with other churches of a sister denomination, each raising a portion of the salary, and taking a part of his time. In this way the pastor is enabled to live. The burden is also made somewhat lighter upon the churches. The raising of the money to run the Protestant Churches is always a struggle. The rule is that expenses run ahead of the income. To help out a variety of groups to assist in this laborious matter has been organized. Every conceivable method to induce persons, who would not give directly, to assist the church in her financial troubles has been invented. In a city of four thousand one of the denominations decided to erect a new church. The pastor, as he believed that his standing as a minister in his denomination would be augmented by the magnificence of the building, was ambitious that it should be a large and imposing structure. Plans were secured and the work commenced. When the walls were up and the roof was on the funds failed.

It became necessary to go out and raise more money. The Committee having the matter in charge pleaded with their own members until the last penny had been extracted. Still their necessities were not met. They made a raid upon the community. The committee of solicitation was enlarged, the city was divided up, and this committee went out, going from man to man in all the other churches, soliciting money. The ladies' organization gave suppers, the young people organized lecture bureaus, and lectures, concerts, and shows of nearly every description where there was the promise of gain was offered to the community, in the name of the church. An implied boycott for merchants, lawyers, physicians, and business men in general was employed. This was continued for several months, and at last more money was obtained, and the building was finished. This struggle produced a new situation. The new building was by far the best in the town. The denomination had gained a decided advantage. Because of the inroads made upon another denomination a second church building was determined upon. This church must raise not less money, but more, so that a finer building could be erected. The new building is to be within a few hundred feet of where the elegant rival building stands. Again the town must be taxed. There follows a repetition of the struggle of money-raising. Then a third and a fourth church is forced to rebuild until all the leading denominations in the little city have rebuilt. Within a few years this town, for the purpose of erecting new churches, has been compelled to raise from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for new church buildings. While doing this they must keep up their running expenses. The pastors, whose salaries are small compared with their expenses, find that they are not paid promptly, and often are forced to cancel a part of what was promised them. They must also subscribe to the new buildings. Not unfrequently real hardship is involved. Now the sad thing concerning this is, it is not a fancy sketch. It is not even some-

thing of rare occurrence. The thing here described has actually taken place in all its details. It is now taking place in hundreds of American villages.

The pastors and their families are bearing, because of this situation, burdens which are grinding almost to death. The man who goes to the ends of the earth to preach the Gospel to the heathen receives a living salary. Provision is made for his care during sickness, or after he has so worn himself out that he has ceased to be effective. Provision is made for the education of his children. The man who takes the average parish at home sees little possibility for the education of his family, if he have one, beyond what the children can do for themselves. He cannot send his children from home to study. With his meagre salary there is little possibility for his finding a season of rest away from his parish and free from work and care. His library, his working tools, are meagre. He takes the denominational paper, but such journals and quarterlies, which are so necessary that he may keep pace with the times, are beyond his reach. There is little incentive to study. The financial strain is ever on and he loses spirit at the first. There is a garden, and his necessity compels him to make this produce as much as possible. The life of the student is dissipated. Every expense is cut to the limit. His wife joins, and together they fight the prolonged battle, a struggle to keep out of debt. Not only is the pastor an educated man, with cultivated tastes, but his wife is an educated, cultured woman, not unusually the most cultured woman in the community. She is forced to be cook, scrub-woman, wash-woman, nurse, tailor, dress-maker, as well as the leader in every kind of benevolent and missionary work. This man and his wife have come from homes of culture and refinement and have artistic tastes. Children are born, and as they grow older become more expensive and embarrassments multiply. The parents determine that at any cost they shall be educated. The time never comes when the father can take fifty dollars from his salary to aid his child in

his study. If the boy or girl ever secures an education he must work it out for himself. The child in a clergyman's home, so unfortunate as to be born physically weak, is usually doomed. The people are hard pressed, the salary gets in arrears, the pastor struggles to keep out of debt, expenses increase, the man and his wife grow desperate. Something has to be done and done at once. The only hope which appears before the poor fellow is in moving. His church owes him a few hundred dollars, which he cannot collect without bringing himself into disrepute, and so he sets forth to find another field. This affords a brief respite, with a cheering ray of hope, as he enters a field just left by a man suffering under burdens similar to his own. The moving incurred a slight debt, and scarcely had he become settled in his new field when the struggle commenced in an intensified form. If he be successful, it is possible that by the time that the next move comes he has just about evened up with his creditors. Under such conditions should we be surprised that the heart grows heavy, and there comes a loss of confidence, so that as old age comes the man is forced to apply to some Church Board for aid, the very application for which in the form required is an acknowledgment of financial insolvency and failure. The number of men who bear just this kind of burden is very large. The only hope remaining for such is the final release, and the assurance that in heaven, even for poor ministers, there will be no financial burdens. How men of spirit, with the full average of ability, having as much ambition as their fellows, loving their wives and children as much as other men, and would do as much for their comfort and happiness, are able year after year uncomplainingly to bear such burdens, with no hope before death, is one of the unexplained marvels. Yet we hear men discuss the brevity of the pastorate to-day, as though it were something for which the minister is responsible. We hear men wonder why God does not send more men into the ministry. Is it very probable that the man at all familiar with

the condition of the average minister to-day will willingly turn from the hope of a good income, a comfortable home, and a possible competence to enter upon such a career of humiliation, embarrassment and financial pinching, which grows tighter with advancing years, as is proffered in the ministry? Is it strange that men thus harassed should seek a measure of relief by seeking a new field? Ought we to wonder that some men in the ministry, counted slow of pay, whose salaries are always in arrears, can never rise above the charge? Now, let us ask, what is this all for? Is it to send the Gospel into all the world? Is it for the sake of Christ our Lord and the salvation of dying souls? Then we could call such a course heroism, an expression of the noblest character. But this is not the reason. It is that we may maintain our denominational fight. It is a part of the struggle to continue our present system of denominationalism.

These are some of the hardships forced upon us by denominationalism. Such hardships number a large proportion of the active ministry. This kind of hardship breaks the spirit of multitudes of the finest and noblest of American men and women. Sometimes we even assume to speak of these hardships as enduring hardness for Christ's sake. Men who are bearing these burdens, together with their noble, patient wives, are saying, "This is denying ourselves for Christ's sake and the Gospels." Is it true? Would it not be nearer the truth to say, "This is self-denial for the sake of maintaining denominational lines"? Is it not also true that such a course is really a retarding of the progress of the Kingdom of God on earth? Our pastors are denying themselves for the sake of Methodism, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Lutheranism. In a little village where there should be but one church we find three, a Methodist, a Baptist and a Lutheran. There are one hundred and thirty people living in the village. Trying to eke out a subsistence upon such salaries as they receive, are three pastors. All three are genuine men of

God and are sincerely desirous of doing His will. They all preach the same Saviour, from the same Bible; they urge the necessity for the same kind of repentance and the same faith. If any two of them should go away and their churches be dissolved, and their adherents should enter the remaining church, would the preaching of the Gospel in its purity cease? Would Christian work diminish? Would the kingdom of God suffer in any respect? Then why should there be three men to starve and to burden the community when one could do precisely the same kind of work, and do it far better? Simply because we would have fifty Methodists ministered unto by a man who bears that particular stripe, and forty Baptists and the same number of Lutherans shepherded by men who bear the imprimatur of these particular denominations. These men are denying themselves not for Christ's sake nor the Gospel's, but for the sake of the Baptist Church, the Lutheran Church and the Methodist Church. Men subject themselves to this kind of hardship, not to lead souls to Christ, not to persuade men to believe in the Gospel, but to make a Baptist of him, or a Lutheran, or a Methodist. These three pastors are all Christian men. They desire the glory of God and the salvation of men. They show their sincerity and depth of character by the readiness with which uncomplainingly they assume burdens. There is a way in which the great denominational leaders, who direct the establishment of the smaller fields, appear like certain persons spoken of in the Scriptures, who placed upon the shoulders of men burdens too heavy to be borne, but did not themselves lift a finger to help. This course seems scarcely right. Neither is it quite fair to the Great Head of the church to say that this kind of self-denial is for His sake. He certainly never has placed such burdens, for such reasons, upon either the churches or the ministry. These burdens are unnecessary and are placed upon us, not by God, but by our denominations. Christ makes no such demand upon His followers. It is the spirit of denominationalism. The

Master is not glorified by any self-denial for such sectarian ends. Such self-denial increases the embarrassment of the church. It is worse than wasted, for it plunges the church of our Lord into a state of confusion. It retards the progress of the Kingdom of God. We had almost said better would it have been if those practicing such self-denial under such conditions had refused to subject themselves to such indignities, and had never entered the ministry. Such self-denial should not be called Christian, for it is purely sectarian.

CHAPTER VI

THE WASTE OF DENOMINATIONALISM

FOR a generation there has been a movement in every department of business to diminish the expense of production. One of the means by which this has been attempted is to increase the volume of business done by a given company, thus diminishing the cost of producing or handling each article. Manufacturers seek to enlarge the output, which works to their advantage in several particulars. It makes it profitable for them to put up-to-date and more effective machinery in their plant. This economises in the expense of labor. They are able to secure raw material on better terms when they can purchase in very large quantities. They can dispose of the manufactured product to better advantage because of increased shipping facilities, diminished expense for salesmen, and similar items. As this method has succeeded, it has grown, reaching out farther and farther, until it now includes nearly all kinds of manufactured articles. Men have entered larger partnerships, bringing large masses of capital into combination, and making large business a possibility. Large plants have been erected, and a multitude of laborers employed, and the effectiveness of labor has been largely increased. While under this method there has been a steady increase in wages, productiveness has been so much more increased that, while there has been an increase in profits, there has been a large decrease in the cost of the commodities to the public. Seventy-five years ago there were no great shoe factories in the country. It used to be the custom to manufacture the clothing worn by the farmer's family in the home. The New

England farmer every Winter brought to his home the travelling shoemaker, who remained for a week or more, making up the family supply of boots and shoes for the coming year. Thirty-five years ago, in a village in Vermont on the corner of two streets, stood a store, which was a frame, white building. High above the second-story window were black letters, plainly showing through the paint, the name of a man followed by the word "Hatter." For many years in the rooms in this second story there lived a man who manufactured hats. His customers were the people of the town and the farmers of the surrounding country. In the childhood of many now living, scattered through the New England towns, were what was then called "carding mills." Every Summer after "sheep shearing," the farmers took their wool to these mills, where it was cleansed and made into "rolls." These were taken home to the farmers' wives, who during the Autumn days spun them into yarn and wove the yarn into cloth. Nearly all of the heavier cloth was manufactured into clothing, and was worn by the family. Here and there were persons known as "fullers," and those who could afford finer garments took their cloth to these persons, who made it thicker, firmer, and more attractive. The farmer took his horses to the village blacksmith to be "shod." The smith cut the shoes from bars of iron and hammered them out on his anvil, making the entire shoe. From a smaller rod he hammered out the nails, and all that was needed was manufactured in this shop. One hundred and a little more years ago every nail used in the erection of buildings was hammered out on the anvil by the village blacksmith. Today no man can afford to make horseshoe nails upon the anvil. Building nails would cost a fabulous sum if they had to be made by hand now. All this kind of work is done in the large factory, and so cheaply that no smith can afford to do it by hand. This is because by combination it has become possible to use expensive machinery and manufacture large quantities, reducing

manyfold the price of the article made. In transportation a corresponding change has taken place. Seventy-five years ago or less, a man living in Vermont who desired to go to New York City would be required to purchase several tickets, each taking him over the road of a given company. Suppose he start from Burlington, Vermont. He would buy a ticket to Rutland, change cars, buy another ticket, recheck his baggage, and at Troy repeat the experience, and finally arrive in New York, consuming a part of two days. The trip can now be taken on a single ticket, with baggage checked through, and in an afternoon. If a merchant in New York desired to visit Toledo, Ohio, during Buchanan's administration, he would purchase a ticket for Albany, and check his baggage. Here he would change cars, obtain a new ticket, check his baggage, and go on to Utica, where he would repeat the experience. This would be repeated again at possibly Syracuse and Rochester, Buffalo, Erie and Cleveland. His ticket would cost him from six to ten cents per mile. If he were fortunate he would arrive in Toledo on the third day out of New York. Three days was the time allowed for this journey. All this has changed. The little roads have combined and formed a great railroad system. The various systems have made alliances until to-day transportation has been cheapened, made more rapid and almost as comfortable as sitting in one's own home. The time has been reduced so that a man can take his seat in a car in New York just at evening and leave the train in Toledo the next morning. While greater speed is made, and transportation has been cheapened and rendered safer, the workmen receive greatly increased wages.

In mercantile lines we find a similar movement. The department store is the result. This is simply the gathering of a number of old stores into one building, under a single management, with a single office force, thus materially diminishing the cost of doing business. Wages have been increased, profits increased, yet the

goods are given to the purchaser at a greatly reduced price. It is impossible for the old-time store to compete with the modern combination store. Our age has caught the spirit of combination, and we see it working out everywhere. Small concerns are combining, making larger and larger stores, and larger factories are coalescing, forming still larger. The result is cheapening production, increasing wages, and augmenting the profits of capital, while the consumer pays far less for the articles purchased. This spirit has found its way even into the life of the home. We have the combination homes. Family hotels and the great modern flats are illustrations. In these the modern and expensive homes are obtained at a minimum of cost. The movement does not seem to have stopped. Co-operating housekeeping is being not only discussed, but has actually found a place in modern life. Everywhere appears the concentration of forces, the combination of capital, small interests combine and form large companies. economy is secured, effectiveness increased, and every one is benefited. But to this movement there appears a single exception, the church. Religious work is still carried on in the same old, wasteful, extravagant way. While everywhere else we find combination, the cutting down of expense, the increasing of effectiveness, in the church we cling to the same old divisive, extravagant method employed by those who lived a hundred years ago. In some quarters the incongruity has been felt, and we are seeking to raise up a class of specialists, who go about the country holding schools of "Efficiency" in a desperate struggle partially to remedy the evils of our course, by causing these expensive methods, if possible, to be somewhat more productive. The work of the Protestant Church of to-day is carried on in very much the same way that the manufacture of shoes was when the shoemaker went from house to house. The church is just as ambitious to grow as was the old-time "hatter," "shoemaker," "fuller," or blacksmith to become rich. At that time, with his constituency, about all the manufacturer could

do was to live. The church in her divided state is working on in the same old expensive manner. We multiply church organizations, church buildings, and different lines of church activities. We increase our church organizations and buildings to three and five times as many as we actually need, and place three or five men at the head of them to starve, as preachers and pastors, where a single man could do the work very much better alone. This is not only increasing the expense of running the church three and fivefold, but it diminishes the effectiveness of the work of these men in very nearly the same ratio. We have so adjusted our system that there is a continual interference between the various denominations in nearly every community. So keen has become this competition that in most cases the only possible way in which a single congregation can succeed is to turn cannibal and feed on its competitors. That we may maintain this condition we are taxing our members excessively, and demanding extreme sacrifices on the part of the clergy. With this, even we come short, and seek to supplement our efforts, and in some measure relieve the strain by a great variety of expedients. Among these we have "Revivals," "Lectures," "Concerts," "Socials," "Suppers," "Bazaars," and a variety of methods to catch the crowd and obtain its money. We find our church organizations engaged in peddling cook books, selling perfumery, soap, post cards, the picture of the pastor, aluminum ware, fireless cookers, carpet cleaners, silk skirts, corsets, and I know not what else, receiving a small commission for the labor, which is supposed to be turned over to the church. This, it is hoped, will swell somewhat the ever-depleted treasury.

Such frantic efforts, we find, are not sufficient to maintain this kind of evangelism. The churches of the stronger fields must send help to the feeble sisters less favorably located. Pastors, representatives of Boards, agents, bombard our churches with appeals for help. Money must be obtained or the struggling churches

must go down. Throughout the entire country there are multitudes of weak churches, foreordained to be weak and feeble so long as our present system continues. Help must be secured for these. It is probably true that two-thirds, if not three-fourths of the money which is used in so-called home mission work, goes to churches which by their existence diminish the real force of Christianity in the community. It is not unusual to find two, three and even four churches in a community, each drawing help from the denominational Board, and which succeed in keeping each other weak and ineffective. Were there a single church in the community it would be strong, self-supporting, and respected by all. In such a field every effort which is put forth by a pastor or earnest Christian worker to secure the attendance of persons who are attending other churches, not only is an interference with success of the kingdom of God, but is worse than a waste of religious energy and consecrated money. Many illustrations of previous chapters could be fittingly used here as evidence. We see in this a criminal waste in money, in effort, and in men.

This waste is not confined to new fields and the less developed communities. If this were all there would be the hope that at some time things might become adjusted, and a rational basis reached. We find it just the same in the old and established States. A New England village, of two or three hundred population, where there used to be one strong Congregational Church, with a large, imposing building, has been crowded by another denomination forcing its way into the community. It may be a Baptist Church, or a Methodist Church. While they may not become strong, they do draw the strength from the older church. The little churches struggle on, they are unable to make headway, but they succeed in embarrassing the old church. Existence becomes a fight for them all, which year after year with desperation must be waged. They erect their buildings, and pastors come. The number

who have no church home increases. The churches no longer lead the community. The hope of the little congregations is that some day there may arise a dissension in the large church, when, like birds of prey, they will swoop down and gather in the disaffected. The sad thing, the Gospel is no better preached; Christian work is no better done than before the competition commenced.

Here is another instance where all the organizations are of long standing. It is doubtful whether it may be possible to find in America a single village of seven hundred people which has not at least two Protestant Churches, and probably three or even more. Not far from the place where the writer sits is a little hamlet of, possibly, twenty houses. The little country store and post office are the only business in the place. In that village are three Protestant Churches. One has a fairly good congregation, mostly farmers. The pastors of the other two churches seldom have in their congregations over twenty or thirty persons. Is it not an unpardonable waste of men and money to attempt to maintain three churches in such a community? The pastors must be paid something, the buildings must be kept in repair, heated and lighted. Every person in the community could be just as well cared for in a single organization and building. The work would be just as effective, and the preaching of the Gospel just as helpful to every person as it is now. Just as pure and spiritual a type of Christianity would be maintained under such a condition as now. But this, while done in the name of Christianity, is not in the interests of the cause of Christianity. It is done purely for the sake of denominationalism. It is to develop, not Christians, any one of these churches could do this, but sectarians, men who shall bear a denominational stamp. To one on the outside this must seem devoid of the true spirit of Christ. To such it would seem that the money went to foster dissension. Surely no organization other than the church would for a moment think of doing so waste-

ful a thing. The marvel is, the Church of Christ should.

Going in another direction from this same place is another village, a trifle larger than the one of which we have been speaking. We find here three church organizations, with three separate buildings. Turning in another direction, and a little way in the country, are two church buildings, with organizations. In the same county is a village of about two thousand, with five Protestant Churches, and a large Roman Catholic Church. Another village of about twenty-five hundred has five Protestant Churches, another thrifty village, in the same county, with a population of one thousand, has four Protestant Churches. In the same county, in the open country, at cross-roads, are eight Protestant Churches. These churches all have buildings, with pastors who regularly supply them with services. There is a multiplying of church buildings and organizations to an extent where the waste seems simple extravagance and unjustifiable. It is probable that if in the county in question four out of every five churches should lose their buildings by fire, and never rebuild, and thus four-fifths of the organizations should go out of existence, the kingdom of God would be decidedly strengthened. The spiritual needs of the population would be far better served, and no one would suffer from the change. These people all accept the same fundamental doctrines and are striving for the same great end. A wise combination of churches in this county would enable those remaining to equip themselves far better, to secure more efficient pastors, to do far better work, and to do it on, at the most, one-third of what is now paid. Two-thirds of the money now expended simply decreases the inefficiency of the church.

But let us look at another type of church. Here is a county seat with a population of 3,600, with sixteen Protestant Churches. Another county seat with 5,000, and which is said not to be "over-churched," has nine Protestant Churches. It is difficult to find another town of equal size, without more churches. There are

something over 555 men, women and children, if all go to church, for each organization. But as there is a strong Roman Catholic Church in the city, the number per church is reduced to about 520 to each Protestant Church. We must further remember that, as in every other community, there is in this city a non-church-going population of several hundred. After these are deducted we must reduce the number per church to less than 500. This is a much better showing than in most cities or villages. Now if for a moment we examine this city, we find that even here there is a most extravagant duplication. There is a needless duplication of buildings. Two buildings, at the most, could care for the entire population. This would save at least seven buildings, as one organization has not been able to build. There is a needless duplication of pastor's work. Instead of fifteen or eighteen sermons each Sunday two or, at the most, four would be far more effective. One or two pastors, with assistants and helpers would be able to look after the religious interests of the city far better than the nine men can do it under the present conditions. In this city alone more money every year is worse than thrown away in maintaining these nine organizations, twice over, than is given by all the churches to benevolence. So many men in every community simply get in each other's way, that the cause of Christ suffers serious loss. The waste in money and men, because of such interference, is serious. The gigantic waste of consecrated energy is appalling. One wonders why the church will persist in going on in this way when, at the most, one-third of the men and money would accomplish far greater results. It seems that we have grown thoughtless and have drifted into the habit of spending money in a prodigal manner. To illustrate, suppose the churches of a given county require one hundred thousand dollars to carry on their work successfully. This amount would provide for all the work which they could do, and the provision would be adequate to support all departments of the work well. Un-

der our present denominational method we pursue something like the following course. We raise the hundred thousand dollars needed. Then we divide ourselves up into little groups, build up a multitude of little organizations, and raise another hundred thousand dollars. We then give the money to these organizations, and set them at work to draw away members from each other, and in a variety of ways to retard and interfere with each other in the work which great efforts are made to perform. That this interference may be made even more effective, we raise a third hundred thousand dollars, employ more men, and then consider that God ought to bless us in our labors, and reward our zeal by helping us to eat up some of the other denominational organizations. This seems very much like engaging a skilled workman to perform a piece of work, suppose it be to grade a road. No sooner does he set out on his undertaking than we engage a second man and send him out to grade the same road under slightly differing specifications. We expect him to use practically the same material for his work as the first man. In our religious endeavors we send out one man to perform work, then send two after him to hinder him in his efforts and undo his work. It is true that some of the men who hinder may be cheaper men, but they are able to do the damage. Suppose a banker of experience, after having made a success of his business in a large town, should propose to establish a string of banks through the county. He sends out suitable men, and opens a bank in every favorable community. The scheme is a success. He decides to establish more banks. He finds and sends out other men to the same communities and villages. He puts two, three, and even four banks in the same little village, where already he had opened a bank. He reasons that the difference in personality of different men, and their different modes of doing business, will reach all possible classes in the community. This, surely, he reasons, will augment his profits. Business goes on all over the county. He has established a

bitter competition with himself everywhere. By his multitude of little organizations he has so increased the expense of doing business, that in only one or two of the principal towns can his banks pay expenses. These must send help to the others. Should any man attempt such a system of banking his relatives would apply to the court that a guardian might be appointed to prevent his squandering his property. In any reasonable court the request would be granted without delay. But this is very nearly the method pursued by the Christian Church. In nearly every community Protestant Churches are practically working in this manner. Our denominational spirit, which first broke the church into fragments, places us in such competition with ourselves that the work becomes two and three times as expensive as it need be dividing its effectiveness in half. If results at all commensurate with the efforts put forth were secured there would be little occasion for complaint. When we could cut down our expenses at least sixty per cent, and by so doing increase our efficiency fifty per cent, possibly one hundred per cent, to continue in our present course seems little short of madness.

This waste is not alone in money and preachers. We have a little town of two thousand people with six or eight churches. Under such conditions there is an appalling waste of local talent. To illustrate take the waste in musical talent. Were there in such a community a single church, there is in the town sufficient musical ability to make a splendid choir, able to render first-class music. Such a condition would powerfully strengthen the religious and devotional spirit in the community. A single church could have a good pipe organ, and make the music a feature of strength and dignity. Under the present system it is necessary that there should be five or six choirs, in each of which there may be one or two or three really good voices. The rest are simply such as can be obtained. Instead of one fine pipe organ, and well played, we have five or six little wheezy cabinet organs, handled by inexperienced musi-

cians. The organists have no incentive to improve themselves, and the music is a difficult, discouraging feature of the church services. If there were a single church there would be one splendid Sunday School, with the best man in the town at its head, and an able, efficient corps of teachers. But with this work divided into six or eight groups the enthusiasm coming from numbers is lost. With such a division of the forces most of the Schools must be under the leadership of persons of inadequate ability. Among the teachers, the majority must be persons but poorly equipped for the work. Besides this there is in most of the schools, ever staring the officers in the face, a threatened deficiency on the financial side. The tendency is to seek the cheapest kind of equipment obtainable. It therefore comes about that in communities where the church might be strong, commanding the respect and confidence of all, she is weak and moves, if she move at all, with an uncertain, tottering step. Outsiders often look upon these organizations and question whether they will be able long to maintain themselves. With the religious forces of a community divided and subdivided in such a manner, the cause of religion is of necessity rendered weak. The religious influence of the community, being divided, is diminished. Instead of the Christian element in the town, taking a strong and commanding position, aggressive, victorious, the outside world gains the impression that the churches are poor, weak, struggling organizations, able at the best to maintain but a precarious existence. In the county seat of 5,000, with nine Protestant Churches, suppose during the year they receive on an average of ten new members each. The increase is so small as to seem insignificant. But were there only two organizations, and the same number had been received, it would give forty-five new members to each organization, and the work would have the appearance of prosperity. Every one would feel the encouragement derived from progress. The members of the church, under such conditions, would be inspired.

As it is the apparent gain is so small, that it seems little better than barely holding their own.

We divide and subdivide our organizations, we separate our workers into little groups, having no real affiliation, reducing the efficiency not alone of the clergy, but of every working element in the congregation. The saddest thing about this, we do it in the name of Christ. We boldly make the claim that we are maintaining the Gospel, and laboring for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Strange that the church of our Lord should employ such economy. It is indeed doubtful if anywhere in all the world, even among the most uncivilized and barbarous tribes, there can be found any process of waste in serious work, which will bear comparison with this universally practiced by the Protestant Church. We take the money which has been gathered by hard work to be used for the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord, and waste, worse than waste it, as though we were under no obligation as the stewards of the mysteries of God. We take the host of men who have devoted many years, and thousands of dollars in preparation for the sacred work of the Gospel ministry, and put them under conditions which must minimize their influence. We place a man in a congregation of fifty, when if he were the only pastor in the community he would minister to two hundred, and not be embarrassed by two or three other men struggling in competition with him. It costs just as much time, money and effort to educate this man for this work, as though he would be the only man in the place, and were given a free hand. After he commences his work he must make the same preparation for the pulpit to preach to fifty that would be required to preach to two hundred. He must do this on a salary so pinched that he is forced to work without the stimulus of a library, or such tools as successful work requires. Then instead of giving to the ministry the inspiration of addressing large congregations, we take away the inspiration and increase their difficulties by dividing the congregation into fragments.

How can men do their best under such conditions? There is a worse than a needless waste of energy in all this. It is certain that some one must bear the responsibility for such a condition.

There is a mass of energy and manhood in the church which has almost unlimited possibilities. The members of the church have accumulated untold millions of money. The whole world looks at the benevolence of Christian people in astonishment. Men are ready to devote fabulous sums of money to the cause of Christianity. We, the Christian community, with the leaders in the church, take this vast sum of money and in our manner of expending it cause that at least fifty per cent of it actually retards the progress of the Kingdom of God.

While pondering over these things, amazed at what I saw, there came a vision. I thought I fell asleep, and as I slept dreamed a dream. I thought I was transported to the world of spirit, and there saw assembled in the great council chamber of Hell, in the presence of the arch fiend, Satan, all the devils in the region of darkness. Satan was upon the throne. In addressing his vassals, he expressed rage at the great loss suffered in certain portions of his domain. He was startled. Something must be done. He declared that unless some move could speedily be made which would turn the fortunes of the day the forces under him would be driven from the field. There must be renewed effort lest righteousness should reign in the world. He had called in all his subjects, from all regions in a great council, in the hope that they might discover some method by which their former dominion might be regained. After a long, portentous pause, devil after devil arose and suggested some one thing, some another, and thus a long time passed, and no progress had been made. As there seemed no help, Satan was about to adjourn the assembly in despair, when over in one of the back rows of seats, behind a pillar, there arose an old demon, with shrewd cunning and unprincipled knavery stamped

upon every feature, and asked permission to present a scheme, which to him seemed to promise hope. Speaking deliberately, he proposed that the entire company of demons return to earth, and instead of trying to oppose the advance movement of the church, or attempting to draw the great mass of Christians away from Christ, instead of seeking to induce Christians to deny Christ, or to commit some sin, that they enter the church, and join with the members of the church in their work. Labor diligently to fire every Christian with a burning zeal. Stir up among the Christians greater enthusiasm for the Word of God, and for Christ and His truth. Urge men to fly to their work with a holier zeal. Make sure that all are filled with earnestness. When this is accomplished raise some question about methods, not necessarily a very important one, lead some to give larger emphasis to some doctrine, and to burn with zeal. Touch no great fundamental doctrine, but raise questions about matters of little importance, so that no one will be shocked, or suspect the source of the difference. Continue to fan the enthusiasm, and to stir the zeal, and all in the name of a more spiritual, purer religion. Lead men to become very conscientious. Under such conditions discussion must follow, interest increase, until differences shall arise, divisions come about, and the powerful church will break up, and one part will stultify another. As the church breaks up into fragments, each fragment will zealously strive to propagate its own notion, and the great hosts of Christianity will form hostile camps, and fall upon each other in deadly conflict. The one church of Christ will become hundreds of smaller churches, and they will fight among themselves. If we can but accomplish this, exclaims the old devil in fiendish glee, we will induce them to waste their energies, spend their money, and to wear themselves out, under the delusion that they are serving their Master, while they are destroying each the other's work. In this way the church will be shorn of her power, her energies will be wasted, her resources

dissipated, and thou, O Satan, shall reign with undisputed power over the hearts of men. The old devil completed his speech, and as he sat down amid the yells of delight the great host rose to its feet and pandemonium rang with hellish glee over the cunning scheme which had been proposed. The plan was at once adopted with shouts of anticipated triumph, each hastening his way to perform his assigned part in the great tragedy.— Here I awoke from my sleep, and as I looked out over the church, and saw what to-day she is doing, wasting her strength, throwing away her resources, counteracting her influence, my soul grew sad, for it seemed evident that the vision was not all a dream. It, too, fully accounted for the strange spectacle of modern denominationalism.

CHAPTER VII

THE VAINGLORY OF DENOMINATIONALISM

IT is sometimes urged in favor of our present denominationalism that it introduces a kind of rivalry between the churches of a community which serves as a healthful stimulus. We are told that, like competition in trade, competition among churches serves to keep them alert and active. There is in this claim more of truth than at first appears. To illustrate let us take a little farming community, in the midst of which is a small village. There are a railway station, a post-office, two or three stores with a population of about three hundred. In this place are three churches, a Methodist, United Brethren and a Presbyterian. Each, under the conditions, has a hard struggle for existence. The leading man of the community, in the prime of life, the owner of the principal store, has made a small fortune. Having reached the limit of development in his present location, he looks about for a buyer, that he may move to the county seat, where there is a larger field. A purchaser, an energetic man, who has been successful in a still smaller field, soon appears. Having some capital, he buys the store and stock of goods. He also purchases the dwelling house in which his predecessor had lived. It is evident to all in the community that this man must have some wealth, and that he is a man of ability. It is evident that in his position, living in one of the finest homes in the place, that his family is destined to occupy a leading place in the social life of the community. It is learned that where he had previously lived the family was active in the United Brethren Church, and the adults were members. The man was

the Superintendent of the Sunday School. The wife, a good sensible woman, had been active in the ladies' organizations. The oldest daughter, a young lady of nineteen, had attended for a couple of years a near-by college, and was a musician of recognized ability. There were three other children, two boys respectively, sixteen and eight, and another daughter of six. About two weeks before his family moved the husband and father came to the village and took charge of the store. He had some slight repairs and changes made on the house, getting it ready for occupancy. The United Brethren pastor, a young, ambitious preacher, foreseeing the struggle which must soon take place, with a feeling of confidence due to the advantage which he felt he had in this case over the others, opened the fight at once, and was a frequent caller at the store. He discussed business, religion, and especially the cause of the church. While the man was rather too non-committal, still he felt greatly encouraged. Sabbath came and he was gratified to see the new-comer at the services in his church, both morning and evening. At once he took steps to commit the man to his church, where he reasoned he naturally belonged. Early the following week he learned that while the man had been a member of the United Brethren Church in the last place where he had lived, as this was the only church there, there was some doubt as to which church he would join in his new home. Before her marriage his wife had been a Methodist. His daughter had attended a Presbyterian college for two years and had returned home a pronounced Presbyterian. He was unwilling, so he told the United Brethren pastor, that his family should be divided. He could be at home in either of the three churches. He would wait until his family might come and then they would decide where they would go. It became more and more evident that the church which should be so fortunate as to secure this family would receive a very pronounced advantage over the other two. The coming of this family and the possible church

connection which they might make was one of the most important events which had taken place in the town for many years. The three pastors became fully alive to the importance of leaving nothing undone which could secure this advantage. The members of the church discussed the possibilities and even the few outsiders became interested as they watched the situation.

At last the great day, when the family should come to town arrived. It so happened that the house which the merchant had purchased was near the Methodist parsonage, next door, and only the second building from the church. It was recognized by all that this gave the Methodists some slight advantage. Two large loads of goods stopped in front of the house. A little later the family carriage drove up, and the merchant and his family alighted. Being the last week in April, and the house having been vacant for several weeks, it was consequently cold and damp. It was not a suitable place for the family to spend the night. The Methodist pastor and his wife hastened to the rescue. It was the easiest thing in the world for them to come right over to the parsonage and remain until they could have time to get settled in their new home. It was so convenient for them, and it would be no inconvenience to the pastor and his wife. Really they would so enjoy having their new neighbors live with them a few days, that they might become acquainted. While they were discussing the question, who should happen along but the wife of one of the Elders of the Presbyterian Church. She saw the commotion and the Methodist minister and his wife, and at a glance took in the situation. She lived a few houses farther up the street. As she approached them, she paused, and finally stopped, and while no one introduced her, she made herself known and proffered any assistance she was able to give. Her home was much larger than the parsonage, and her family was not so large as the family of the Methodist minister, and nothing would please her more than to have them all just come right over to her house. Her husband, who had

known the gentleman for some time in a business way, would be disappointed if they did not come. He had spoken of entertaining his old friend while he was moving in, only a day or two before. She urged that they come immediately and make her house their home for a week or ten days, thus having time to get settled leisurely and completely before they commenced living in the house. It was at this point that the United Brethren pastor, who had been out calling on a sick parishioner, was returning home and had come around this way on purpose to see if there were any signs of the family's arrival. As he knew the merchant so well, as the entire family had been connected with the United Brethren Church where they had lived, and their pastor there had dropped him a line asking him to call at once and show such courtesies as he could, of course he offered his services. His greeting of all was very cordial, but seeing the situation he soon passed on. It was a season of great anxiety to the entire community. Where would they go? It was finally settled that the wife and little girl would go to her husband's room, where he had lived since his coming to town, and where already he had arranged for them. The Methodist pastor had a son about the age of the younger boy, and the two boys would stop there. The older daughter accepted the invitation of the Elder's wife. The pastor of the United Brethren Church went home with a heavy heart. He recognized that in the first round he had lost an important point. His little church needed just such a family. By right he should have the family. If he could get just this family, his church, which was the weakest church in town, at once would become strong, and very soon it could not help, with such an influential addition, becoming the most powerful church in the community. He had been hoping from the time that Mr. A. bought that store for a great uplift. It not only meant a great help to his church, but it would give him such standing in Conference that his next appointment could not fail to be much better, possibly one of the best in the Con-

ference. With him great things were at stake. He must win. At the supper table he had a conference with his wife, who never failed him. It was a regular council of war. First they discussed the situation, making some rather positive remarks concerning the other pastors, and their people, and expressing rather positive opinions on the general subject of proselyting. The interest in this case came dangerously near to warmth of feeling, but it was no time to indulge in such things, it was a time for action. Before supper was over a course had been hit upon, and the wife at once went out and called on four or five of their most active women, and explained the situation. They at once got together, and that very evening a plan of campaign was fixed upon. The new family was to be besieged by the leading women of the United Brethren Church, so arranged that no two should be there at the same time. It was also planned in such a way that there should not be too great an interval between calls. This started on Tuesday noon and continued until Saturday night. During this time the wife had promised that she and her husband would attend the United Brethren Church on Sunday morning. Sunday morning came, and the entire family was at the United Brethren Church. They had scored a real victory, and the fact was recognized by the other churches and by the outsiders as well. The reception which they received was scarcely less than a genuine ovation. It could not fail to gratify the most ambitious. The children were all placed in classes in the Sunday School, and despite their assertion that they wished to be considered only as visitors, they were all enrolled as members of the classes. The father was asked to teach a class of ladies, which was without a teacher. At the close of the school they all gathered about him, full of enthusiasm; he was such a lovely teacher, he must consent to become their regular teacher. They had been so long without a leader, he was just the one they needed. He must take the class permanently. The mother was taken into the infant depart-

ment to see how the pastor's wife managed the little ones. Before the school closed the superintendent announced that he wanted to introduce Mr. A., who had been the very successful superintendent of the United Brethren School at X, and although he had not said anything to him about doing so he was going to ask him to say a few words to the school. "Mr. A., we are so delighted to have you and your family with us, and feel sure that you will be a very great addition to our School."

Every one Sunday afternoon was forced to admit that the United Brethren people were far ahead in the contest. They had outgeneraled completely their competitors. It looked as though they were about to score a most decided victory. That evening the father and mother attended the Methodist Church, while the older daughter and son went to the Presbyterian. This gave hope both to the Methodists and Presbyterians, and served to double the efforts of the United Brethren people. The healthful competition was thus stimulated still more. For four or five weeks the struggle continued, much to the detriment of all the churches. There remained a degree of uncertainty to the last. Finally the family brought their letters and united with the Presbyterian Church. This created no little flurry in religious circles, while on the outside all was tranquil, beneath there was disappointment and bitterness. The United Brethren Pastor's wife, who had struggled so hard, and who saw so much for her husband's future depending upon the outcome, was bitterly disappointed and was heard to make some remark to the effect that they went to the Presbyterian Church because the "Presbyterians were so high-toned and put on airs." Three or four of the leading families of the town attended this church. An old Methodist woman said that they went to the Presbyterian Church "because it was so cold and formal, and they lacked spirituality." Because of their want of "fervor and spiritual warmth they were unable to appreciate the real live Christian-

ity of the Methodist Church." The fact is that it was the older daughter who settled the question. She had been for a time in a Presbyterian college, and while not a member of the church, she had become accustomed to the mode of worship of this church and declared that she was "a Presbyterian" and could not "feel at home in either of the other churches." This was her first opportunity to unite with the church of her choice and she was unwilling to let it slip. So they all entered this church.

This illustrates excellently well the kind of healthful spiritual stimulus engendered by denominationalism. The struggle in this little church-burdened community is typical in kind of the struggle taking place in every town where there are two or more churches. Every possible method which the ingenuity of man can invent to land safely a new family, which moves into a town in a church, is tried. Ladies call on the family, men call at the place of business to greet the newcomer, the children go to play with the children just come to town, the wife is invited to social functions, and to various gatherings of the ladies of the various congregations, where she is expected to become acquainted and form social bonds which may serve to determine her to join the particular church. Sunday morning children are sent around to bring the strange children to Sunday School, and even after it is settled which place they will attend the children of the various schools seek to persuade the children to leave the School where they have started and to "come to our School." Not infrequently for months there is kept up this kind of pitched battle between the churches. At last, sometimes as a matter of self-defence, the family attaches itself to one of the churches. This mode of procedure is so common that families moving from one community to another expect it. The element which does not go to church anywhere, found in every community, watches the fight with increasing interest. To them the whole affair appears like a selfish squabble to inveigle this new family into

one of the churches. Remarks like this, "until this family is settled, sinners will be given a rest," are not unfrequently heard. The statement is not so far from the truth. The struggle not only stirs up the least spiritually minded in the church and congregation, but moves the best men and women, even the pastor, with emotions and desires far from devout. The organization winning cannot help feeling a conscious elation of questionable character, while the losing churches experience a depression and a feeling dangerously near to downright jealousy.

But this so-called healthful spiritual rivalry not only manifests itself upon the occasion of a new family's coming to town, but it is a constant feature of church work. Always, year in and year out, this rivalry is hard at work. Let us speak of a little town of about 1,800 population. There are six Protestant Churches and a strong Roman Catholic Church. In one of the churches a pastor, who had been for some time with his people, came into conflict with certain members of the congregation. Being a strong-willed man he could see only the course which he had laid out, and consequently it was the religious duty of all to follow it. The difference grew into a controversy, and waxed stronger. The church was involved in a most unnecessary and unfortunate quarrel. The congregation, at first disturbed in its work was finally divided into three parties. One party, and the one which carried most weight in the community, believed that under the conditions the peace of the church demanded a change in the pastorate, and proposed such a course. Another party, under the direction and control of the pastor, maintained that the pastor had done only his duty, and they did not believe that a church-clique had any right to control a church, and that Mr. Z. should be condemned and put out of the church and his party suppressed. It was better to let Mr. Z. and his friends leave the church than to lose the pastor. These persons had for a long time been disturbing factors in the

life of the church, and it was a good time to permit them to depart. The third party was composed of those who were very anxious to restore peace, and thought some kind of a compromise might lead to this end. They wished to keep on good terms with both the contending parties. They tried to appease both sides, and to secure peace. Despite all efforts to the contrary the fight increased in bitterness. The other churches of the town became interested and looked on with fraternal solicitude. The contending church was the wealthiest and most influential in town, and the parties involved were the leaders in the church. Whatever disaster came to this organization the others could not help profiting by it. At last, as was necessary, a crisis came. Mr. Z. with three or four sympathizing families demanded letters of dismission; leaving the church they went to one of the others, where they were most cordially welcomed. The pastors of the various churches were guarded in their remarks, for they knew the possibilities of a split, and if it did come each desired that his church might be in a position to receive some of the wreckage. The result was that the pastor left, and behind was what appeared like a hopeless split. Some of the members went to one church, while others went to another, leaving only the nucleus of the former congregation. With difficulty this little handful sought to gather their resources and prepare for a new start. Many families not feeling in sympathy with the situation commenced to attend other churches. The different pastors and their people, as best they could, sought to interest these dissatisfied persons. They employed every means to lead some of them to identify themselves with their own congregations. The members of the various churches were most diligent in attentions. Arrangements were made so that the pastors might meet the disaffected parties, and there was a season of quiet but constant activity in the religious circles of the town. This situation continued, sometimes in a more aggravated condition, then quieting down matters would proceed more

smoothly. The disturbed congregation tried a change of pastors, and this was repeated several times, but each, after a brief trial, was willing to withdraw. A few years thus passed. At last, after careful search, and with a supreme effort, the remnant secured a man sufficiently strong and politic to heal the old trouble. Time also did its work, and the former bitterness became less intense. This led to another migration from church to church. Mr. Z. and his friends, who had gone together to one of the weaker churches, and had become the financial and social life of the organization, began occasionally to appear in the congregation of the disrupted church. In a few months they returned. There were some families who refused to return and take their places in the old church, but nearly all who had gone away in the heat of the controversy found their way back, and the old church gradually assumed her former position. Mr. W., who had been most zealous in the support of the pastor, refused to return. He threw himself with burning zeal into the work of his adopted church, and sought to draw and hold as many as possible of those who had gone out with him. He discussed the situation, claiming that the faction which had driven away the pastor was still in control, and for him to go back, under such a situation, was an admission that the part he had taken was wrong. No, he could never submit to such a course. He sought to keep alive the bitterness which had originally disrupted the organization.

In this case, which actually occurred, and the parties are known to the writer and are now living, we have another illustration of that denominational rivalry which is said to stimulate a healthful competition.

One way in which this denominational competition manifests itself, and which was referred to in a previous chapter, is found in connection with the Sunday School. Each church in a village is ambitious to have the largest and most effective Sunday School. It has come to be accepted in the popular mind that the church is dependent upon the Sunday School as the

source of her growth. Consequently it is necessary by all possible means to make the Sunday School grow. Competitive efforts of various kinds between the departments and classes of a given school are introduced. Prizes are offered. The boys and girls of the school go out and commence their work. As it is hard to persuade persons not interested in the Sunday School and who seldom, if ever, attend to go, these laborers take the shortest and quickest way to secure results. They at once commence to intercede with their playmates, urging them to visit their school. Sometimes they say, "Come and stay long enough to be counted, and that will help our class to win the prize." A few weeks of this kind of spirited competition pass and there has been transferred from other schools to this one a score or two of the boys and girls to the one where the contest is in progress. Week by week the attendance is published in the local paper, and in glaring headline the prosperity of this school is heralded, and the school is proclaimed as the most up-to-date, the most thoroughly alive organization in the town, or possibly the county. Every one is urged to come out and see how a real live, effective organization is doing its work. The other schools in the community feel the depleting influence of this kind of warfare. Some of the older ones look into the situation, and under the conviction that the only way in which to meet such an onslaught is to emulate the example of this school and, if possible, to avenge itself. So month after month, year after year this kind of "healthful rivalry" continues. It is evident, of course, that competition stimulates work, rivalry intensifies competition and we have a sort of internecine warfare among the Sunday Schools of the sister churches of a community, and the results of this warfare gives us our standard of prosperity. Such a prosperity on the part of a faction of the church of Christ must cause the enemies of true Christianity genuine delight.

Such competition among the different organizations in the church makes its influence felt in the organiza-

tions of the young people. In every community there are certain families which are stable, and it is known that they and their young people will be loyal to their churches. In these days it is found that most of the young people in nearly all communities are left to follow their own inclinations. Some of these become interested in some person in another church. Gradually such go over to the young people's organization of that church. By doing this friends meet, and the intimacy is afforded a favorable opportunity of continuance. At first the young man goes as a visitor, later is invited to lead the meeting, and his success is complimented. Every one is excessively attentive, his vanity is appealed to and soon he becomes a member of this organization. Soon the pastor is interested, and the result the church membership of this person is transferred. In some homes families have been divided among several churches. It is not at all impossible to find families of five or six divided between four different churches. I have known of instances where the father attended one church, of which he was a member, the mother another, and the two children were members of still different churches. The religious life of that household is broken into fragments for no better reason than some accident in the Sunday School or the Young People's organizations. Where the children went was settled by their playmates.

Every pastor, especially in a town or small city, is made to feel the grinding of this competitive spirit as is here set forth. It is not difficult to analyze this kind of competition and discover the effect which of necessity it has upon organizations. This is the healthy rivalry which denominationalism stimulates. The weakness of many of our church organizations is such that the pastor and his helpers, whatever they may wish to do, believe themselves forced by the necessities of the situation to engage in these most distasteful squabbles. They must win every adherent possible, for the life of their church depends upon this. To the church-

member success in this kind of rivalry is the possible lightening of heavy burdens. To fail is to make certain an increase of burdens. To the pastor it makes surer the reception of the meagre salary promised by his congregation. Not infrequently it means the only escape from hopeless debt. It is like a man carried down to his destruction in the current of a turbid stream, he will catch at straws. Anything is better than what he now has. Men who are passing through such struggles deserve our sympathy. While it may seem that they can hardly be doing the work of the Lord, there can be no question but this is just what they desired to do when they started, now they are where their very lives depend upon their struggle.

There is another spirit which appears not alone in the little weak organizations in the small towns, but everywhere. Pastors and officers alike desire to have it known that their church is a prosperous one. Says one pastor, "I have the leading church in the city." "There are two different denominations in our town; my church is the largest." Sometimes we hear it said, "My church is the strongest socially," or "My church has the wealth of the city." "My Sunday School is the largest in the city." The church looks with pride upon the position which their pastor holds in the community. They say, "Our pastor is the most popular man." "The most drawing preacher." Each man, pastor and all, is filled with a spirit, certainly very like the spirit of vainglory. This is said not because it is wrong to glory, but this is not glorying in the Lord. It is glorying in Presbyterianism, in Methodism, in Congregationalism, or in the splendid success of the great Baptist, Lutheran, or Episcopal Churches. The glorying is denominational. It is of this world, and is born of the spirit of denominational zeal. It compels the pastor to keep his eyes upon the line which marks off his flock and to do his utmost to prevent any of his fold from wandering over into another. He is interested in training his young people, and all who enter his church in the spirit of loyalty

to his own denomination. The denominational shibboleths, Methodism, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Lutheranism, are shouted forth in the hope that they may charm and fasten within the denomination all who by chance may come within the magic circle. Every earnest pastor, who puts himself and his life into his work, if he be thoughtful and honest, must confess he has been unable wholly to escape the toils of this blasting sectarianism. He is forced, from a sense of necessity to do all within his power to ground his young people so soundly in the teachings of his church that they shall never desert her. He must ground them in the life of John Wesley, John Calvin, Westminster Abbey, Plymouth Rock, Martin Luther, Roger Williams or some other denomination saint or shrine, that these persons and places shall become a magnet that shall give direction to their views, control their beliefs, and determine their lives. It is not the Scriptures alone which must become the standard of faith and practice, but the Scriptures as interpreted and applied by Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Alexander Campbell, or some other man, who at some time broke away from the church of his fathers. Great pains are taken to render it impossible for a Wesleyan, a Presbyterian, a Lutheran, or a Congregationalist ever to feel at home in any other kind of a Church than that of his childhood. We make so much of a ritual, or of the absence of a ritual, or of some characteristic or form of service, that those of our training may never be able to rest contentedly under any other form. The pastor who to the greatest degree succeeds in accomplishing this is counted by his church the most successful. Surely there is in all this something dangerously like glorying in John Wesley, The Westminster Confession, Apostolic Succession, or some other shibboleth. It is placing the emphasis not upon the teaching of the Scriptures, pure and simple, but upon the interpretation of some man. It is fair to say that this kind of denominational pride has little in it of the spirit of Christ. We may well question whether

it would be possible for denominationalism to maintain itself unless much attention were given to this kind of teaching.

This kind of denominational glorying leads to some strange things in church expansion. Denominations watch with eagle eye for opportunities to go in and "occupy" new fields. A new school, or a new preaching station, is supposed to open a new center of denominational influence. Some years ago near a city of some twenty-five thousand inhabitants, there grew up a small manufacturing community. It was so far removed from any of the city churches that it was very difficult for these families to attend them. The population increased, and there was a desire for some kind of religious services. One of the men, living in the community and a member of the church, after talking with several of his neighbors, visited a pastor in the city, and arranged for him to preach on Sabbath afternoons in their school house. A Sunday School was organized by the people, which met just before the preaching service. Everything moved smoothly, and all were happy. For something more than a year matters proceeded in this way. The community did not increase in population as was expected, and it was doubtful whether the community would maintain itself. During this time the pastors of another denomination in the city had been watching this work. Finally one of the pastors of that denomination, a zealous man, whose spirit was quickened by the healthful rivalry of denominational competition, formed a plan. The churches of that denomination, in the city, quietly raised two thousand dollars and authorized this man to act. He went to the syndicate, holding the land, which was seeking to establish the town, and made the offer that if they would donate the lot he would build a church. The lot was selected in a conspicuous part of the town, and before the people of the community knew that any such move was to be made the building was actually commenced. The clergyman, who for a year and a half

had, by the invitation of the people, been working in the community, and had the organization of a church already under way, was astonished to find a church edifice in process of erection. Few knew who was doing it. There was one man in the community who belonged to the denomination, which was putting up the building, and he alone knew what was going on. The building was soon completed and the pastors of that denomination in the city and surrounding country were present and dedicated the house to the worship of God. Half a dozen persons, nearly all living at a distance, were organized into a church. The deed was done. There was room for but one church. The man who had labored for months in the field had nothing to do but go on and organize a rival church, and put up a building such as the people desired, or to do the Christian thing and withdraw. He advised the Sunday School to go into the new building and he withdrew from the field. The people were indignant and desired him to remain, but he would have no part in such a divisive work. Several of the leading families of the community refused to have anything to do with the new movement and refused to attend any of its services or in anywise to support it. They openly condemned what all called the unchristian methods of the intruding denomination.

Who would suggest that in such cases it was zeal in the cause of Christ which led to the competition? It was simply a case of pure denominational zeal. It was in no sense a struggle to lead the people to Christ and to build up Christian character, but to establish one more organization in a particular denomination. This is a logical result of our system. If men are loyal to their denomination they must feel a deeper interest in that one than any other. They will do more for their own church. It is but natural that in their zeal for their religious party they will at times do extreme things. To the extent that this kind of denominational interest develops must there be a want of the love of Christ. The interest in denominationalism leads to glorying in

denominationalism. This develops denominational or party pride. This is unchristian. At the advent of Christ the Hebrew Church was passing through such an experience. It was divided into factions, and these were at enmity with each other. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Zealots, the Libertines and the various parties among the Jews had developed the spirit of party strife to such an extent that the true worship of Jehovah had come to be a cold and formal exercise. The struggle engendered bitterness, hardening the heart against spiritual influences, leaving the man a partisan. A similar struggle is now in progress. It is true that we talk much of brotherly love, Christian fellowship and church comity, but the fact stands before us that our denominational pride is so strong, the vainglory of denominationalism takes such a hold upon us that two denominations holding practically the same creed, and having the same polity, find it an impossible thing to unite. From each party comes the suggestive cry, "we cannot sacrifice" this doctrine or that custom, "for it would be to surrender a distinctive characteristic of our church." We are willing to come together if we can agree to unite upon the basis of our church. If this cannot be done, we must keep up our quarrel, for the glory of God, and remain apart. Denominational vainglory stands in the way of church union far more than any real differences. Churches assume this attitude and justify themselves by saying, "We stand by some phase of religious truth." "It is our mission to emphasize this truth and keep it before the world," even though the church be embarrassed by unseemly contentions and the onward progress of the Kingdom of God be retarded. Under such conditions who is willing to say that these differences, these disagreements, these religious contentions and quarrels of so serious a nature as to separate religious families and prevent brethren from abiding together in peace and unity, this kind of denominational competition is a means of grace? Who would pronounce it to be a real, healthy, spiritual

stimulus, which tends to deepen spiritual life, leading to a profounder communion with Christ, helping to extend the kingdom of God?

CHAPTER VIII

DENOMINATIONALISM A PROCESS OF STULTIFICATION

WHILE there are many embarrassing complications arising from denominationalism, while so frequently unseemly conflicts arise which greatly involve religious work and the workers are forced to undergo personal hardships, while the waste arising from such unwise divisions of the forces is great, and all results in engendering an unchristian spirit and developing false pride and vainglory, still these are not the most unfortunate features of our present church organization. Were these all, the work of the church could be carried forward with a reasonable hope that ere long these conditions might be adjusted. There is one result of denominationalism which strikes at the life of the church, which is more vicious, is fraught with greater evil than any which we have noticed. Denominationalism stultifies the efforts of the church, and deadens her spiritual life. The unavoidable result of the contentions and embarrassments of the spirit of denominationalism is to smother the spiritual life and destroy the spiritual power of the church. Denominationalism weakens the church's grasp upon the Gospel. It distorts her faith. It separates from Christ.

Let us notice some of the beginnings of these divisions, and study their nature at the fountain head. When Protestantism in the sixteenth century first emerged from the Roman Church and entered upon a course of development certain marked breaks soon appeared. In Germany Luther and his associates set in motion the elements which produced the Lutheran Church as we know it to-day. In Geneva, under the leadership of

Calvin appeared other elements from which has come the group of churches known as Calvinistic. At Zurich, and in that neighborhood, appeared, under the leadership of Zwingli, a third development. While there were other and less important movements, these will illustrate sufficiently what we are seeking to show. The weakening effect of so many different kinds of Protestantism was so apparent to all the leaders of the Reformation that during the lifetime of Luther, Calvin and their associates most strenuous efforts were made to bring the warring factions together into one organic whole. A meeting was held at Marburg, under the leadership of a pious layman, Philip, where Luther, Zwingli and Oecolampadius made an effort to agree. They all saw the desirability of the success of the attempt. They recognized that in a large measure the future of the Reformed Church demanded a unity. After earnest and somewhat warm debate, the conference ended, as all believed unfortunately, without having attained its purpose. Luther refused to extend the right hand of fellowship to these brethren. John Calvin with great earnestness, under the profound conviction that the success of Protestantism demanded an organic unity, labored in vain to bring it about. Every one of every party recognized that for the reform movement to be divided was a grave misfortune. They saw that to the extent of the division their cause was weakened. Heroic efforts were made to bring the leaders together, and by compromise and a better understanding to secure the organic unity of the new church. The great Protestant movement was broken up, yet the spirit of denominationalism had not yet appeared. The different factions became national churches, and neither attempted to invade the territory of the others. Luther's followers were in Germany, Zwingli's in Switzerland, largely near Zurich, while Calvin's zone of influence was in Geneva and the French Provinces. But even such divisions were recognized as the weakness of Protestantism, and everywhere men labored and prayed for a coming to-

gether into one splendid, strong organization. The men of that age unhesitatingly expressed their conviction that the division of Protestantism was a serious misfortune.

In the history of the church following this period every time there appeared a division in any church organization it was looked upon as a misfortune, a serious injury to the cause of Christ. In every instance prolonged and earnest efforts were put forth by able men, who labored hard to avert what they believed would be a weakening of the church. It is so clear that argument cannot be needed that the breaking up of an organization into smaller and unsympathetic parts necessarily weakens the cause for which it exists. This is not merely a misfortune, an interference with the progress of the kingdom of God at the time it occurs, but so long as the division remains it continues a hindrance to the growth of the church and interferes with the normal progress of the Kingdom. Take as an illustration an individual church in a country village. Suppose in this church there arise a difference of opinion concerning certain details of management. This difference develops until a violent division results. A faction leaves the organization, withdrawing their support. The faction organizes itself into another church. A lot is purchased and a building erected. The financial strength of the former organization is divided. The spiritual power is divided. The expense is practically doubled. We have two organizations, with two buildings, two pastors, and two sets of services to maintain where one organization and one pastor could do the work better. There is furthermore a weakening of the cause of religion which results from the want of sympathy between the factions. The influence of the church is greatly diminished in the community. The outsiders think they see the same contentious spirit which exists in the world. Then the men who are engaged in this contention are in no small measure unfitted for real spiritual work. Their communion with God, in such a

state of mind and heart, is more or less broken off. They are rendered less effective in all their labors. Who ever heard of any man who advocated a church quarrel sufficiently serious as to split a church as a means of increasing faith, developing spiritual mindedness, and increasing religious efficiency? Such quarrels always lower the spiritual character of the organization. Every one deplures such divisions in a church as a calamity in the religious life of a community.

In larger organizations, like denominations, we must reason in the same way. If discord be a weakening of a small organization, it will operate in a similar way in larger bodies. No one ever maintains that to divide a denomination into hostile and contending camps is a strengthening process. We never find congratulations tendered over a church quarrel, even if it be between factions in a denomination. In 1835 in the Presbyterian Church in the United States there was the culmination of a struggle between two contending parties which resulted in the division of that body into what was known as the Old and New School branches. The division was deplored by every one. Its baneful influences were such that thirty years after its occurrence the leaders in both organizations began a struggle which finally, in 1870, resulted in the reuniting of the two warring factions. The event was the occasion of the greatest rejoicing in both branches of the church. All believed that a great victory had been accomplished.

In justification of the various divisions of the church we are told that the divisions of Protestantism are like the divisions in an army. The army is divided in corps, divisions, brigades, troops, battalions, companies. Each has an organization of its own, with its responsible officers. While this is true, the army is a unity. It is one. There are different kinds of troops, with different equipment for particular lines of work. We have the infantry, artillery, cavalry, the sappers, the hospital corps and the signal service. But while in the effective army there appears all this variety the army is a single

organization. There is one, and but one commanding officer. This commander controls the movements and activity of every single man. The entire army is under the same system of tactics, and all are controlled by the same rules. The church broken up into denominations is not an analogous organization. In the church if we say we have the cavalry, the infantry, the artillery, and the various departments, each is independent of the others. The cavalry has no connection with the infantry or the artillery, and runs off to fight its own battles independent of the other departments. The engineers sometimes throw up earthworks in one place, then in another with no regard to a commanding officer. Every regiment in this spiritual host ignores every other regiment, and is unsympathetic in its relation to the rest of the army. The Presbyterians will not take orders from the Episcopalians, nor the Congregationalists from the Methodists. What would such a kind of disorganized independency on the part of the various units of an army do to that army? Such a conglomeration of organization under separate leaders in an army would do just what it does in the church, introduce the most disastrous kind of confusion. In the church men work hard, at great cost, and as they look up they find that members of another detachment of Christians are breaking down their work, and opposing their progress. A church enters a community and organizes a congregation. A building is erected, and prosperity appears. Before they have quite arrived at the point of self-support in comes another organization, and divides the patronage, drawing off some of their members. No arrangement was entered into between the two organizations. Shortly, as the community begins to increase, another church comes, then another and another. The community could support splendidly a single organization. It is impossible for it to maintain all which have come. The competition of denominations stultifies the pastors, and stops their growth. Because of these divisions we present to the world a divided front. This weakens

the influence of the church. She fails in no little measure in her great mission of saving men. To such a degree has this influence been felt in mission fields that determined and earnest efforts at this moment, led by native Christians, are being made to bring about combinations, and these are aimed at a final union. In India, in China and other lands the denominational divisions of the church have put her at such a disadvantage that the various mission Boards of the home churches have been compelled to make arrangements whereby these disadvantages might in some measure be overcome. While the churches at home have not come together an agreement has been made whereby the mission fields have been divided so that, so far as possible, unseemly conflicts may not occur. Protestantism has found it necessary to seem to be in her foreign work a unit. So she seeks to make it appear to the heathen world, that she is undivided. One church will be given a single country, or certain provinces, and another church another country, or other provinces, and all promise not to trespass upon each other's fields. This all goes to show that even the officers who are directing this work have learned enough of the unsoundness of our present denominational spirit, and of its stultifying influence, that in their foreign field they are seeking to avoid it. The fact that all of the great denominations have been led, without exception, to recognize the wisdom of such a division of territory is proof positive that the officers of our Boards and our missionaries have learned that the kind of competition which exists among denominations at home is so unfortunate, so stultifying in its influence, that sacrifices must be made to avoid it in mission fields. So stultifying is denominationalism in mission work that by getting far enough away from each other the church leaders hope to escape its baleful influence. This has been but partially successful. The native Christians at the present time, in China, Japan, and India have felt the evil consequences of these divisions to such a degree that they are demanding that there shall be

but one native church of Christ. They ask that this shall be national in extent, and undenominational in character.

There is still another way in which the divisions of the church stultify her influence. Suppose we go to a city with 150,000 inhabitants. Twenty denominations are working among its people. All are recognized as Christian and are designated as Protestant. They work independent of each other. In the city is a large foreign element. These are not connected with the Protestant Church. Another large element, outside of any church, is American born. There are many who contribute to the support of the churches, but beyond this have little real interest. The necessity of a religious life is pressed upon the people. The love of Christ is preached and an effort is made to attract the non-religious into some church. The outside men and women look upon these efforts very much as they do upon the efforts of the political bosses to secure votes to carry an election. The first and a most difficult thing which the Christian worker has to do is to persuade these outside people to recognize the true spirit of Christianity. In one of our city churches there was a pastor who visited for some years in a certain home where they did not attend church. The children were in the Sunday School and the parents were often urged to attend Divine worship. One day this man made an earnest plea and presented very plainly the duty of church attendance and the obligation of religion. The wife replied, "My husband and I have talked this over, and sometime we may go to church. We have agreed that when we do we will go nowhere else but to your church. We are ready to promise this." These people saw a multitude of churches. They saw a kind of competition, the different pastors were working to secure persons to attend their own churches. This man had been so attentive to them they felt that should they ever attend church, or need a clergyman, this man by his faithfulness in visiting them deserved that he should be re-

warded. If they ever give any attention to religion they will take his brand. This is the way thousands of those seldom seen in any church look upon religion. It comes about largely through the competition of the denominations. The very zeal of pastors and members stultify the work of the church. A man once said to one of our pastors, "Yes, I believe that a man ought to be a Christian, but it is so hard to tell who is right. I must have time to look the field over." Then there is such a supposed diversity of views, and such an opposition of methods, as it appears to the irreligious, that we must not be surprised if such persons come to look upon religion as a vague uncertain kind of thing, not to be understood by any one save a few specialists, and possibly not even by such. One man told a visiting clergyman, "It is not possible for all the churches to be right. Who can tell who is right?" Another man said, "I will wait until the churches agree among themselves, then I will attend to religion. I think it will be time then." It may be true that such reasoning is not justified, yet it exists, and it certainly has a basis upon which to rest. Just as long as the denominations keep up their contentions and wrangle over the questions which divide them, unable to agree who can say that those on the outside have not some ground upon which to base their reasoning, when they justify their indifference? We may say that the differences which separate Protestants all have to do with minor matters, and do not impair Christian living, or salvation, nevertheless it is difficult to convince the worldly man that such is the case. Then if these differences are of so little moment, and have no real bearing upon a man's relation to God, there is all the more reason why we should cease to quarrel, and come together. By our different denominations we justify the belief of the outside world that our differences are very important. These divisions, for such reasons, stultify the work of the church. When we present Christianity to a man, we must not call him stupid or unfair if he refuse to admit our claim, while we are

in his view so opinionated ourselves that we cannot fellowship with others who have just as real a claim to be the genuine Christians as we ourselves. When we claim that our differences are so unimportant it is but fair that there should be in his mind the question why should we break up the church over such trifles? It is in the eyes of the world, and ought to be in the eyes of the church, a reproach to disagree on such an important matter as religion, over little trifles. This is the way men reason in all our larger cities. Our denominations stultify the progress of Christianity. In the little country town where the church's struggle for existence is so intense many a man remains outside the church because he wants nothing to do with a spirit which appears to him so narrow and divisive. There is to him exceedingly little that is Christlike in denominationalism. The man of the world fails to see in the church the power of God. He sees on the outside little to distinguish the church from other organizations which make no such pretensions. The spirit which he sees in the church, so far as he can see, has the same rancor and contention, the same selfish ambitions as he sees in commercial organizations and worldly organizations generally. The ambition of pastors and Christians seems to him to be to build up a particular organization rather than to reach the unsaved. As the man of the world sees church life, and from his point of view interprets its aims, he fails to recognize any real appreciable difference between the spirit of the church and that of a political party. He sees that quarrels in the church are as likely to occur as quarrels in a political party, and they are even more bitter. He sees political parties disrupted by factional leaders. He thinks he sees churches disrupted by what he denominates factional leaders. The world recognizes that splits in political parties, even though based upon what the leaders designate as important fundamental principles, are likely to prove disastrous, not unfrequently fatal. When the church of Christ splits we call our divisions denomina-

tions, while to the man of the world they look like factions. We say that these denominations stand for great principles, they witness to some distinctive religious truth. The man of the world fails to see in what particular this differs from the political party, save in name. We unhesitatingly call the fighting factions of political parties, those divisions which cannot agree to come together, warring factions. To the non-Christian man similar divisions in the church, which hold to some tenets so strongly that they cannot agree to come together, are warring factions. Is not this, after all, a correct diagnosis of the situation? The man who is a factional leader, and all his followers, may be perfectly sincere in his belief that what he holds, which differs from the others, is important truth. To him this phase of truth may seem so fundamental that those who fail to accept it are on the way to perdition. In politics such a leader is a factional leader. In the church we have been accustomed to call him a great reformer. The factions in politics weaken the party. It is equally true that the factions in the church weaken the church. The various divisions which have arisen in the church, even in more recent times, are hopeless so far as ever absorbing the original body. They simply break away from the body of which formerly they were a part, organize themselves into another church or denomination, and then go out into the field and endeavor to take members as rapidly as possible from all other bodies. Now if we are honest, if we hold the church to as high a standard as we do the political organization, we must look upon every such disruption as a bad, unfortunate thing, and often nothing less than a religious calamity. In so far as the new body succeeds it leads away from the parent organization. So far as it does this, it counteracts the influence of the body from which it came out. In so far as the parent organization succeeds in holding its members, it stultifies the efforts of the party which left its fold. In so far as the schism succeeds in drawing to herself others, it stultifies the mother church.

This stultification is not temporary, soon to pass away after the first heat of the break, but is destined to continue as long as the two organizations exist. It is fair to say so long as they refuse to agree sufficiently to unite, that they are in open opposition. Their disagreement is so violent that they cannot come together and live in peace. They are opposed to each other. Were it otherwise, it would be easy for them to reunite. The world sees the division. The world sees that the parties do not unite, and justly concludes that they are so antagonistic, each to the other that they cannot work together. It is true that despite all that may be said, or any talk of the spirit of unity which may be made, these denominations do not agree. Their disagreement is so bitter, and upon matters, of course, so important, so vital to true religion that they are unable to tolerate each other in the same organization. We must also admit that for two denominations to manifest such a spirit is to stultify both organizations. It casts a reflection upon the great truths which they claim to hold. Such divisions bring reproach upon the name Christian. Such a spirit certainly is not of Christ. Admittedly it does not tend to the peace of the church. It must, from the very nature of the case, weaken the church as a religious working force, and stultify in no small degree her influence.

This is still further illustrated by the cases of experience in real life, which can be met on every hand. In a small community there is a little group of persons who by nature are leaders. In any movement their combined leadership insures success. They are usually men of ability, and are the prosperous men in the community. Old and young look to such intelligent men as the persons to lead in any enterprise. In nearly every community there is a group of persons who by natural gifts, taste, and education are the musical leaders of the neighborhood. In a village there may be three or four good singers, with one who is a pianist of some skill. There are a few persons of good character,

who have the business ability and good judgment to manage the affairs of a church in such a manner as to give her a dignified position among the successful organizations of the place. In a community of two or three hundred the number of persons of either class is limited. Suppose that in such a community there were a single church. All the men of the community would be associated together in this one organization. Though in a small village such an organization would have a strong leadership. There would be persons enough of ability to give the organization real commanding influence. There would be enough musical persons to furnish material for a good choir. There would be another group of men with the business ability and enterprise to care for the financial interests of the church. There would be some one who would make an excellent leader in the Sunday School. The church would have a vigorous successful organization, able to command the confidence and respect of every one. The little church of the village would in this way have a more efficient organization than the average church in the city of five or six thousand people. Unfortunately we do not find this ideal condition. Our denominationalism has made it impossible. In this little community of three hundred, three and not unfrequently four, religious organizations crowd in. The working forces of the village are divided. Those who would make excellent church officers are divided into three or four groups. There is possibly but one really good man for the leadership in each organization. One of the best singers is found in one church, another in another church, while the other two or three are somewhere else. The people split into groups, families divide, and the religious life of the community has in it no unanimity. Instead of one good, strong, well-managed, prosperous organization, dominating the entire community, we have three, possibly four, little, weak, struggling churches, with inefficient officers, the poorest kind of music, the Sunday School hampered for the need of leaders and teachers,

trying to grind out an existence. Every church in the village groans under the crushing financial burdens. Not a church in the place has a respectable choir, or a board of officers, which measures up to the average standard of the community. The struggle is a hard one, and the success is never more than partial. It is but reasonable that we should ask why has not such a community a strong, aggressive church able to command the assent of the most intelligent families, and to prove an inspiration to all. Just one thing is in the way, the denominations. Three of these four churches are interfering with the good work which any one of them could do, if unhindered. Any one of the four, with the natural leaders united, could care for the religious interests of the village far better than the four, under the most favorable conditions possibly could do it. They could do more work, do it better and do it much easier if three of the buildings should burn down, and the organizations be abandoned. It would not much matter which of the three it might be to go out of existence. It is evident that any three of these organizations are stultifying the influence of the other one. One influence which this unnecessary number of churches have in the community is to create an impression in the minds of outsiders, especially the young, and more particularly among Protestants, that Christianity is a weak, struggling, irresponsible aggregation of good-intentioned people, nearly always in a fight and hopelessly behind the age. There is also the conviction that these churches have very little spiritual life. Judged from their manner of work they are forced to resort to all sorts of spasmodic spurts to gain some advantage in church attendance over their competitors. With this conflict going on before their eyes it is difficult to persuade the young and thoughtful of the community to enlist in such a struggle. It raises serious doubts in the mind of many whether after all religion be such an important thing.

The above presents not an unusual piece of history in the small community. Were it not that through the

hardening process of time we have become so accustomed to this situation that we have come to look upon it as a kind of necessity, that this un-Christian interference is a part of Christianity, the community would be shocked beyond measure by the spirit which is breathed in denominationalism and there would arise a widespread demand that this discord and contention cease. The community would not endure the ungodly conflict which is being carried on in the name of Christianity. As it is we are stultifying each other's influence.

In these days we hear much from the platform, in religious papers and magazine articles we have it frequently held before us, that there is a woeful lack of young men in our churches. Over and over we are told that the church of to-day is somehow failing to reach the young. Notice some of the facts. There have been sections in our own and in other countries where the divisions of the church did not to so large an extent exist. Not so many years ago there used to be portions of Pennsylvania where entire communities would have but a single church organization. In New England there was a time when there were many places where denominational differences were practically unknown. In the Presbyterian communities of Pennsylvania, and the Congregational communities of New England, it was not at all difficult to secure the attendance at church of practically the entire community. Old and young alike were regular in their attendance upon the religious services. Young men and young women came into the church at the proper age in a most natural manner. There still remains a very few such communities. Out of such come no small or inconsiderable a number of the church workers in her great onward movements. The communities of a single church organization furnish a proportion of religious leaders far in excess of the rest of the church. Examine the other kinds of communities where the religious life is divided between several denominations. Neither to-day nor in former days do we find in these communities church attendance as general

as where there was a single church. The young men who have gone out into the world from communities broken up by denominations have not carried with them the high religious ideals of manhood found where there was but a single organization. With such religion takes a lower place. In no small measure responsibility for such a condition may be laid at the door of denominationalism. Three churches, in a community of three hundred, will not, according to past experience, reach as generally the inhabitants of the community, or to so large a degree command the respect of the young, or the following of all as a single organization. Religious life does not attain so high a standard. The crowding in of the denominations is stultifying.

Through our denominationalism we stultify ourselves by the unwise employment of our funds and energies. We have previously noticed the wastefulness of denominationalism. If we only threw our money away it would not be so bad, even we could stand the sacrifice of good men, but we do worse than this. We labor hard to raise our money, and then we expend it in such a way that it actually interferes with the most successful Christian effort. In a certain city of four or five thousand people there are fifteen or twenty churches. Two or three churches at the most could do the work which is done, and do it far better than a larger number possibly can. Over half of the money used in that town for church support, instead of building up and strengthening Christianity, actually diminishes the good which, unhindered, the other half might do. The money worse than squandered in that community is equal to all that is needed to give the people living there a better religious condition than they now have. The money worse than squandered in this country in the unnecessary multiplying of churches, if saved, would give at least four times as much money for Foreign Missions as we now raise, and increase the efficiency of the church at home fourfold. This could be done and not raise a single dollar more than is now given for the work at home.

In this manner, the money which is being wasted here at home under God would evangelize the world. It would leave our workers at home unembarrassed. It would liberate thousands of men, and place them in a far more effective field. Without increasing our contributions we could increase the efficiency of our churches more than fourfold. But instead of this we raise a certain number of dollars, and start work in a certain community, then raise as much more, and send out men to interfere with and to render unfruitful the first investment. It is exceedingly difficult to explain how intelligent Christian men can be persuaded to continue in a course so unreasonable. If such a course be not stultifying it is difficult to find a course which would be. Should we wonder that the church is so often embarrassed because of the fewness of the young men who offer themselves for the Gospel ministry? During the period of intense controversy, when a large part of the energies of the church went into the fight against other denominations, a kind of denominational enthusiasm was engendered which appealed to young students and led them to offer themselves. Now as we are more fully reaping the fruit of our folly, and feel more sharply the effects of our competition, the unwisdom, possibly at times the unchristian spirit of our course, becomes more evident, and men hesitate to devote themselves to this kind of internecine warfare. Denominational zeal is made to falter before the better judgment of men and who is surprised that fewer are coming forward, offering to enter the ranks of a ministry forced, by our conditions, to engage in such a battle? We are approaching the point where we must rely upon the normal supply from the church for the ministry. If it be true that God give some special call to the ministry, as some of us believe, the question arises, Will He be likely to call a larger number than the church properly administered actually needs? It would be scarcely probable that the Great Head of the church would allow Himself to be made a party in such an unseemly scramble as the mod-

ern Protestant world presents. Possibly the Divine Head of the church may take this method to bring His children to cease their contentions, and to unite in one glorious church. It certainly would be folly on the part of God to call into the ministry three times as many men as are needed, when two-thirds of them would simply hinder the work which the first third might do, if left free. We can scarcely pray that the Head of the church would raise up candidates for the ministry, when we desire to use them to propagate our contentions and to carry on our quarrels. The folly of such a course is evident. Instead of this if our particular church have the only really simon pure religion, and to such an extent as to justify our separating ourselves from all the other churches, it is our duty to pray that God would bring confusion of face and utter failure to every other religious organization, that the pure and real Gospel might have free course and be glorified.

We are taught that if we expect God to co-operate with us and to grant answer to our prayers, if we would have Him co-operate with us in our work, we must put ourselves in accord with Him. Is it reasonable to suppose that God will lend His aid to a religious factional fight? Can we justify men in praying that Presbyterianism may be blessed of God in such a measure that she may overthrow and bring to nought the weighty errors of the Methodist Church, or the Baptist Church, or any other church? Why not offer such a prayer, and do so with the expectation that God will hear and answer? If the Presbyterian Church stands for such important truths, then those denominations with which she disagrees must be in gross spiritual darkness, and be flooding the world with their error. They ought to be stopped. Let us pray that God may stop them. If the Presbyterian Church hold any doctrine of theology, or maintain any view of church polity sufficiently important to justify her breaking away from all other organizations and forming a separate and new church, then any church or organization which denies these doc-

trines or disregards the elements of church polity is guilty of downright sin, and should be gotten, if possible, out of the way. We ought upon all occasions to pray that this might be accomplished. We ought to pray and to work to bring to confusion all those churches, sects, denominations and organizations which dispute these great and important truths. Such bodies ought to be brought to acknowledge their sin, and to turn to the one only and true church. This line of reasoning with equal force would apply to the other churches. In our day such an assumption appeals to the humorous. This is because we believe that our divisions justify no such assumption. There is something wrong in our denominationalism. The wrong is so radical that it demands heroic treatment.

Not alone do we stultify ourselves in the work of the church by our denominational antagonisms, in perpetuating the quarrels of former ages, but in such a course we also stultify ourselves in our relation to the Divine Head of the church. In a sense we put ourselves in a position similar to that of the Rich Young man who once went to Christ asking what good thing he must do that he might have eternal life. While the young man seems to have been an exceptionally fine fellow, for the Master recognizing the excellencies in him loved him, yet he lacked the essential thing which prepared him for Divine service. He wanted to serve God, but he wanted to do it under such conditions as pleased himself. This young man loved his wealth. Is it not possible that in our denominational zeal we have arrived at the point where we are ready to serve God, we will keep all the commandments, we will give generously of our means, we will make sacrifices, work hard and long, we will federate, glorify the spirit of union and brotherhood, but our denomination, our particular schism, this we cannot give up? Like the young man, we return sad, but we return to our denominationalism.

It is probable that with most of us we are disposed to place the blame for the continuance of this disrupted

state of the church upon the other denominations. If they were only ready to make the proper concession the coming together would be an easy matter. We desire just as truly as did the rich young man to have eternal life. We would have a single church, but we are not ready to give up our own. Is it possible that, like this young man, we are in danger? Our fathers became entangled in religious quarrels. They became so heated that, losing the true Spirit of Christ, refusing longer to walk in fellowship in the same church, they violently went apart. Now it is true, that we, their sons, are no longer stoning the prophets, but are we not whitewashing their sepulchres? We are still valiantly standing by the guns which the fathers planted, and upon every proper occasion, possibly fancied proper, with the most approved shells, and the most deliberate aim, we discharge them, sometimes into the camp of the enemy, and sometimes into the air, that, by the thunder and roar, we may cheer to enthusiasm our companions, in a sort of "Fourth of July" salute. Suppose the Lord to whom that young man put his question should come to us and we should ask, "Lord, what must I do?" and He should say, "Come together in peace and dwell together like brethren in one house, in a single church," what would we say? Possibly something like this, "Yes, Lord, we have longed for the unity of Thy church and daily for many years have we prayed for its accomplishment. Lord, we are more than ready. We would gladly make any possible surrender for its sake, but surely Thou wouldst not have me, with all my brethren, repudiate the ordination of the fathers, by submitting to a second ordination, to gratify the members of another church?" Or, "Lord, we are ready to do all things, but surely Thou wouldst not have us disregard that blessed doctrine of Apostolic succession." We have noticed here but two points, but is it not enough to show that as yet none of us are willing to give up our riches? Presbyterians cling to their positions as a matter of religious principle, without wavering. The Epis-

copalians and Methodists, the Baptists, the Congregationalists, the Lutherans, the Church of Christ, and all the others are just as tenacious. No, conscientiously, we will not yield, we will compromise no principle. We each seek to entrench himself so securely as to be able to defend himself against all comers. This unyielding spirit, found in every Protestant Church, is a gigantic stultifying force. Is it a wonder that many of our churches are making slow progress? Is it strange that under such conditions hundreds of church organizations in our country work hard for an entire year and not lead a single soul to Christ? There is something wrong in all this. By our methods we are retarding the advance of the kingdom of God. It is high time that we should pause and look over the field with an honest purpose to do something to remedy the situation. That we may remove the reproach from the cause of religion which arises from our contentions, we must get together. Sacrifice will doubtless be necessary, but it would be so different in nature from the sacrifice which is being made to continue our differences, that we should meet it with joy. By our holding aloof, and refusing to enter into union with the other denominations, we are stultifying our lives. By this course we are stultifying the influence of the church. By this course, in a most important way we are blocking in some instances, and in all instances retarding the progress of the kingdom of God. Had Christians lived together in unity and peace, walking in the Spirit, putting forth the same efforts which have been put forth, expending the same amount of money, and employing the same number of persons to extend the Gospel as we have, it is reasonably sure that ere this the world itself would have been evangelized. We are not doing our part. We still keep up our contentions. We quarrel over questions of doctrine, Philosophy, and church polity. The world moves on in sin. We will not walk together, nor surrender some of our shibboleths; we rather stultify each other, rendering our efforts weak and ineffective,

than surrender something which has survived from the quarrel in which our fathers engaged. No, we will not surrender, we will not walk together, the heathen nations must wait, and souls come into this world, live their span of life here and go on out into the unknown darkness of a faithless, hopeless death, that we may maintain the quarrel of generations ago. By our divisions we are stultifying the church.

CHAPTER IX

THE APOSTOLIC IDEAL

AS serious and harmful as are the results of denominationalism in the light of worldly wisdom there is a more serious, a more appalling aspect, which apparently religious leaders have been very loth to consider, yet of such a nature as seriously to interfere with the onward movement of the Kingdom of God. One of the acknowledged conditions of the presence and co-operation of Christ with His church is obedience. A casual study even of the Old Testament shows clearly that so long as Israel walked with Jehovah, so long as the people kept the Law, observing the religious rites and ceremonies which were enjoined, so long as Israel, as a nation, was loyal to God, the nation was strong and prospered in all her industries and was invincible before her enemies. The moment that there was neglect of the Law, carelessness in the observance of religious obligations, embarrassment and confusion with dishonor appeared. This extended even to the forces of nature. The rain was withheld, locusts and caterpillars appeared in such numbers as to destroy whole fields of grain. The Philistines came over the Judean mountains, and the fields of Judah were devastated and her towns and cities overthrown. The Moabites coming up from the East, the Edomites from the South, and Syrians and Assyrians coming down from the North, plundered the land, sacked the cities and carried the young men and women into captivity. When the people listened to their prophets and turned from their evil ways the drought ceased, locusts and caterpillars disappeared, the enemies of the nation were defeated and driven from the coun-

try and prosperity again returned. Over and over this mode of discipline was brought out on the pages of the Old Testament. It is made unmistakably plain that this was God's method of dealing with His church during the days of the Prophets. Obedience to His will ever brought prosperity. Disobedience, or failure to keep His Law, always brought defeat and misfortune. There is want of evidence to show that under the New Testament dispensation there has been any radical change in the Divine method of government. We do find on the other hand evidence that the same general method still prevails. In the Gospels and throughout the Epistles there are statements which indicate that an important condition of God's favor, of receiving His blessing, upon which depends the prosperity of His church, is obedience to the Law and submission to His will. Among the commandments, the one which is peculiarly the commandment of the New Testament is that the brethren ought to love one another. The New Testament emphasizes the necessity of brotherly love and mutual forbearance. There must be agreement.

From many statements in the Epistles, as well as from some of the commandments of Christ, it is evident that both Jesus and the Apostles foresaw the coming discord, resulting from differences of opinion which would become so intense as to disrupt the church. Foreseeing such a situation, they did not remain silent concerning it. Christ most emphatically spoke of the duty of genuine unity in the church. St. Paul was just as decided, insisting that there should be no divisions. The Lord left many of the details of church organization to be settled as they might arise, and by the church. In such instances she was permitted to follow expediency, or to work out as best she might the problems of the hour. Among these things we find all such questions as arise concerning guilds, Sunday Schools, societies of men and women, young people's societies, and the various Committees and Boards by means of which the benevolence of the church is carried forward. Concerning all these

things the Scriptures are silent. The church was left free to adopt one method and after a time, when it seemed wise, to put it aside and adopt another. Here we might raise the question, Was it the purpose of Christ that His church should remain, as He left her, one, or was she to be divided and subdivided into many parts? If she were to be divided, was it His desire that the divisions should be deliberate, that each division should be an organic part of the whole, or would He have these divisions rise over difference of opinions, quarrels, and so intense bitterness that the division in each case should be a violent disruption? The authoritative answer to such a question comes not from ecclesiastical Conferences, Conventions, Synods, Assemblies, nor is it to be settled by discussion, however wise and logical, nor is the preference and judgment of men, or expediency to determine whether the church shall be one or one hundred and fifty. As with the Holy Sacraments of Baptism and The Lord's Supper in this matter, the church is given no choice. She must obey her Lord.

It is not necessary to examine every possible reference either in the Gospels or the Epistles, which could be brought to bear upon this subject. Our aim will be to bring out the teachings of the Scriptures on the subject of the unity of the church. Does the New Testament teach anything on the subject, and if it does, what? Does the New Testament leave it to any group of believers to determine for itself whether it shall remain in the same organization with some other group of believers, or whether it shall go out and organize a church of its own? Does the New Testament, when fairly interpreted, require the organic unity of the church?

During His public ministry our Lord gathered about Him a group of persons, in number possibly about one hundred and twenty, who after His ascension, and until Pentecost, met in an upper room in Jerusalem. There may have been many others who might be considered as sympathizers, and some who actually entertained

faith in Christ, more or less secretly, not included in the number given above. Among these believers there was a smaller and more select circle, the Apostles, who, that they might be spiritually equipped so as to be able to take up and carry on the work which had been started by Christ, had been given special training. They were carefully trained in the doctrines of the new organization. The general principles upon which the church was to be based were carefully taught them. Growing out of this situation we have two lines along which appears the New Testament teaching concerning the unity of the church. First, Christ was not silent in His teaching of the twelve concerning this unity. In His conversations with them from first to last the Master appears to have had in mind an undivided church. It seems quite improbable that when He said, "Upon this rock will I build my church," that He had in mind a collection of separate and independent organizations. He must have meant a body of believers so bound together as to form a unit, one organic whole, not many churches, but a single church. He taught with unmistakable clearness that a "House divided against itself" would not stand. He taught that here was "one fold" and "one shepherd." In all His teachings we find great emphasis upon the necessity of His followers loving one another. One of the most solemn and impressive acts of His life, closely connected both in time and logical order with the Sacrament of the Supper, is the washing of the disciples' feet. This act seemed to have been connected with a dispute among the Apostles on their way to the upper room. They were about to eat the Passover and they anticipated that some great thing which they had long expected was about to take place, the Kingdom was to be established. What places should they occupy? It was concerning the distribution of the places in the anticipated new government which was the occasion of their disagreement. There seems to have been developed a measure of bitterness, and because Jesus would have no divisions of any kind among His

followers He took a most graphic manner to impress them with the spirit of humility which was the basis of unity. In this connection He taught the obligation of Christian love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." The love which made it possible for brethren to dwell together in unity was an important evidence of the Divine mission of Christ. At the same time it afforded an unmistakable proof of genuine discipleship. One would scarcely suppose that He had in mind that kind of love which would permit such intense disagreements that His followers would be unable to work together, or even to continue in the same organization. In the sacerdotal prayer of our Lord, recorded by St. John, Jesus expresses Himself on this subject in an unmistakable manner. He prayed for His immediate followers, those who had received instruction from His lips, that they might be sanctified through His word. He continues, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." (John XVII: 20, 21.) The unity which Jesus here has in mind cannot have been the unity of the individual believer in the Father. Had this been what He meant He could easily have said it. He prays for those who might believe on Him, that "*they all* might be *one*," just as He and the Father are one. As clearly as Greek could be made to say it He prays for the unity of His disciples, that *they all* might be *one*. If this were not what He prayed for, and had He desired to pray for just this organic unity, how could He have done it? It therefore appears somewhat as though those who contend that this does not mean a unity among themselves, but with the Father, and this in no wise is a reference to organic unity, were so embarrassed by this portion of this prayer that they felt it must be explained in some rather strained way. They will not admit that it means what it seems to, for this would con-

demn them in their denominationalism. They must have denominationalism, so the Scriptures shall not be permitted to condemn it.

In order that this unity for which Christ prayed may become evidence to the unbelieving world, one of two things must be true. The world must either accept the statement of believers, despite every appearance to the contrary that they are in mystical union with Christ and the Father, or else there must be such external evidence that those who are unbelieving and unsympathetic critics of the church shall see such clear proof of this love in the lives of believers that, being unable to question it, they will be forced to admit it. In the connection in which Jesus offered His petition for the oneness of His followers it seems so clear that all must admit that the proof was to be found in the external lives of Christians. The evidence could be seen so plainly by their enemies that they would be compelled to recognize it. It was such a oneness of Christ's followers as would appeal to unbelieving men who would be glad to see something else, such an appeal as would clearly reveal the love of God. Christ earnestly prayed for a oneness of believers, that by means of it the world might be forced to admit that the Father had sent Him. It could not have been merely some kind of internal experience. It must have been something which was conspicuous externally. It was such evidence as would appeal to unspiritual men. Such a oneness of the church could be nothing less than organic unity.

Persons taking the opposite position would have us believe that such a unity was not at all in the mind of Christ. They would have us believe that He actually prayed, not that the church might be one, not for unity among the disciples, but that Peter, and John, Thomas, Saul, Barnabas, and all who should come to believe on Him through their teaching, should be one with Jesus and the Father. The unity is not with each other, but with God. It is further suggested by those who accept this interpretation that this oneness of the individual

disciple with God becomes the evidence referred to in the last clause of the twenty-first verse (John XVII), where Christ prayed, "That they also may be one in us: *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*" When the individual believer comes into spiritual unity with God, this unity is an evidence to the world that God the Eternal Father has sent His well-beloved Son as its Redeemer. This is the argument. Such reasoning to some of us appears as far from conclusive. If we approach the argument based upon this interpretation in the spirit of modern criticism, and commence to seek for a reason why the more natural interpretation has been discarded, and what appears as the more strained and unnatural interpretation adopted, we have not far to go. The sufficient motive is seen in the argument itself. In the civil courts it is considered necessary to take into consideration the evidence of prejudice, or personal interest in any testimony, which a witness may give. Personal interest disqualifies either judge or juror. We are justified in raising the question, Does interest in any position render the mind unreliable in its judgments? In this argument unless we would condemn the church, and the position which we have held, we must find some other way to interpret this prayer of our Lord than the natural one. The attempt to justify the position of the Protestant Church in her divided state furnishes a motive sufficient to give the reason why such an effort has been made. Being a Protestant, to justify the breaking up of the body of Christ into denominations it is necessary to find in this prayer some other kind of unity than organic. Consistency made it necessary to find a unity which would not condemn disruption because of controversy, and want of agreement, and brotherly love. It is therefore necessary to say that it cannot mean external organic unity. We must find another unity. So it was found. Therefore it must mean to be joined to God. It does not mean that Christians should be one with each other, which seems most natural, and which we would expect

the Master would command, but it means, what seems strange and unmeaning, that they must be one with God. It is also not without interest, and should bear upon our study of the prayer, that in the earliest history of the church it was universally believed that the passage meant the organic unity of the church. This was the way the passage was interpreted for more than sixteen hundred years. After quarrels had arisen, and the church had been split again and again, after the appearance of Protestantism, for we must admit this, it was found desirable to find a new interpretation which would not so plainly condemn schisms. Until this condition arose none had questioned the kind of unity in the Master's mind as expressed in this prayer. As soon as the great break other breaks appeared, and the new conditions needed justification. It was at this point that this new interpretation was found. It would suggest that the commentator who was a schismatic, in a sense, sought to justify himself and his church. No one would ever think of quoting this passage as in any measure a justification of such a want of harmony among believers as to make it impossible for them to live together in peace. If in a church there appeared two factions and between them arose a controversy which became so sharp that they both saw the inevitable coming disruption, is it supposable that either party would refer to this prayer as a justification for their violently rending asunder the company of believers? Would some saint, after the disruption had taken place, while preaching to a crowd of godless scoffers, feel justified in pointing to the spirit which led to such a painful experience as evidence of the oneness of Christians in God? Is it not logical that when the ungodly behold the church of Christ violently torn asunder because of bitter disagreement, and see party spirit become so ungovernable that a whole brood of church organizations has come into existence they should look upon the many ecclesiastical organizations as evidence of want of unity between the professed disciples and God? In mission fields the

world over, this want of harmony, this spirit of contention has in such a measure interfered with the spread of the Gospel that the great leading church organizations have agreed to keep away from each other, so that the want of agreement and brotherhood might not be recognized, and to aid in securing this end, have so divided the heathen world among themselves, that there may be but a single church organization in a given section of a country. We may as well recognize at the outset that any attempt to interpret this prayer as not referring to organic unity fails to command the confidence of those who are not Christians. Persons seeking to maintain such an interpretation seem to outsiders to be not quite honest. To the ungodly such reasoning seems clumsy, an awkward endeavor to escape an uncomfortable truth. It looks like a want of candor.

Turning from the question of the interpretation of this particular passage let us seek in other portions of the New Testament some evidence of the way in which the prayer was understood by the men so near the Lord as clearly to understand Him. Then we may look at some of the statements of Christ, and see if they agree with one or the other of the interpretations.

We find Christ teaching that in unity among believers there is power with God. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. XVIII: 19.) It is fair that we suppose the carefulness of the author of the Acts to mention the fact that at the descent of the Holy Ghost, on Pentecost, "They were all *with one accord* in one place," was not without a purpose. While there may have been differences of opinion at that time there had been no split or division in the church. Early in the church there appeared just the same kind of tendencies as those which later made themselves felt. First there arose a controversy in the church in Jerusalem over the distribution of alms. A party appeared, which felt

aggrieved over the manner in which the Apostles managed this part of the church work. It was claimed that there was unfairness, that the widows of the Greek speaking part of the church did not receive their full share of aid. It is probable that had such an occasion arisen during the last three hundred years the Greek portion of the church would have broken away from the main body and organized themselves into a new church. But this was not the kind of unity for which the Master prayed, and those who were at the head of the church believed that a division would have been wrong. At once measures were taken to conciliate the malecontents. There was no examination to discover what might be just, but an effort was made to placate those who thought there had been injustice. This effort was so far reaching as essentially to modify the form of government of the entire church. A new office, the diaconate, was established, and the discontent subsided. A few years later, possibly thirty, at Antioch a great controversy arose concerning whether Gentile Christians should be compelled to conform to the ceremonial law of the Hebrews. This led to the most important gathering of Christendom in Apostolic times. Jerusalem was the place of meeting. Representatives of the new movement in Antioch, the Gentile center of the church, led by Barnabas and St. Paul, defended the Gentile position. While the victory of the new movement was but partial, leading to a compromise, there was no split in the church. The men who were assembled in Jerusalem at this time, among whom were the Apostles, who had been the companions of the Lord, believed that at all hazards, they must maintain the unity of the church. While each faction was as much interested as any factions ever were, while as great a principle was at stake as ever confronted the church they were held together, by the authority of the Apostles, at the sacrifice of what one section of the church considered was a very serious surrender. The whole course followed at this time should have no slight influence in determin-

ing our views concerning the justification of church divisions.

Among all the different modern denominations nowhere is there involved principles of greater moment to the life of the church, principles, apparently more firmly grounded in the direct commandments of God than was the principle which was the occasion of this controversy. No question was ever pushed with more zeal, or greater determination, or more conscientious scruples than appeared in this. It involved elements which affected the life of the church, as well as the Christian character of her members. It was more than a question of peace; it was a question of right and wrong. But under such conditions as appeared in this, the Apostles, though themselves upon different sides, could not permit a divided church. Knowing the will of the Master as well as they did, authorized, as they were, to complete the organization of the church, they did not attempt to explain, or convince, or to force the submission of the minority, but they did determine that the organic unity of the church should not be destroyed.

On another occasion two of the most prominent laborers in the Gentile section of the church became involved in a personal difference, involving, as they both believed the purity of the life of the church. It pertained to the personnel of the company which should go out on one of the missionary journeys. While their controversy was vigorous, while each was conscientious and their personal feelings were stirred to a great degree, so that it was deemed wise to break company, unable longer to work harmoniously together, they were unwilling that there should be a disruption of the church. Such a thing they seemed to have believed would be a catastrophe, at all costs to be avoided. Barnabas went his way, and St. Paul went his way, each selecting his own associates, but both keeping within the same organized church.

It was not many years after this that St. Paul wrote

a letter to a church which he had gathered, trained and organized, at the commercial city of Corinth. During his absence a factious spirit had appeared. Controversies had arisen which had divided the Corinthian church into four, shall we call them, denominations. The church was in imminent danger of disruption. Party was earnestly contending with party, and so serious was the strain that the trouble was reported to the Apostle. St. Paul does not seem even to have considered the great advantages, arising from competing church organizations, that healthful type of religious emulation, which would have stimulated the Corinthian church to a greater zeal in the service of God, but with the intense earnestness of his strong nature, horrified by the thought of a possible division he pleaded in the strongest terms for the organic unity of the church. He admonished them lest the church be wrecked. Notice the earnestness and pathos of his appeal. "Now I beseech you by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there be contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." This sounds very much like the divisions of the modern church. With all the earnestness of his intense nature St. Paul, beholding the danger, pleaded with these contentious Christians for unity. Was it a unity with God, a kind of spiritual unity, a oneness of the individual believer with Christ? Was it the kind of unity which Jesus had with the Father? He besought them that there be no divisions among *them*. That which he so much deplored was the danger of destroying their organic unity. He continues, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" It is safe to suppose that at this time St.

Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles, had a fairly clear conception of the kind of unity for which Christ prayed. So far as we find from his letter, his great solicitude was concerning the possible external divisions of the church. He pleads in the name of Christ, in the most solemn manner possible, that there be no such divisions among them. He then proceeds to touch most significantly, if not prophetically, upon the kind of divisions which threatened the disruption and the weakening of the church. There had grown up an Apollos party, a Paul party, a Peter party, and a Christ party. These sects were contending with each other very much as did Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, and others in the day of the Reformation, and as did their followers, Wesley, Alexander Campbell and the great host of contending Christians in later times. These devoted men were so conscientious, and loyal to Christ, that it was impossible for them to dwell in peace with their brethren, except they bear the name of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell, or accept some shibboleth of a similar import. It seems certainly evident that St. Paul was putting forth his great influence, using all the authority of his holy office as an Apostle, that he might lead these factious Corinthians back into genuine Christian unity. This unity as seen by St. Paul appears to have been a unity in which these contending discordant parties should disappear and the beloved church at Corinth should be one, even as Christ and the Father were one. This unity was, whatever else it might have been, an external, organic unity. This view of church unity is still further brought to light in I Corinthians, Chapter XII. After explaining at considerable length how many members of the church make one body, and that while some members are engaged in one line of activity, others in other activities, that while some hold one position and others hold different positions, like the members of the physical body, all the parts, hand, eye, foot, all the members go to make the one body, and that God hath set these parts in the body as it has pleased Him. God

is represented as doing this, so that there "should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one of another." The Apostle then mentions the various officers of the church, commencing with the Apostles. "Now are ye the body of Christ, and members in particular, and God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily, prophets, thirdly, teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." The thought is that God has done this, established these various offices in the church, in order "that there should be no schism in the body" of Christ. It is impossible to interpret this chapter in any other way than as referring to the church as a body, composed of individuals, each bearing his relation to other individuals, and to the body as a whole. It is evident that the Apostles did not intend to limit the application of the principle which he was discussing to a single congregation of Christians. Neither can we suppose that he would limit this application to the church of a single province, or of any age. The organic body which St. Paul had in mind, the church, was the whole company of believers in all cities and in every province. The little church at Corinth did not number an Apostle among its members. This was an officer who belonged to the whole church, the organic church including the entire body of Christians. While this is true, the Apostle was pleading with the Christians at Corinth that they should cease to be factious, that the divisions among them might be healed, for the great church of Christ, as a whole, that organization at the head of which were the men known as the Apostles, must not be divided. That a division should take place in a single community, like Corinth, in the mind of St. Paul, was to divide the church, to divide the body of Christ. He pleaded that there should be no divisions in the Corinthian church, for this would divide the body of Christ. In this chapter the Apostle goes so far as clearly to imply that he believed that God Himself

greatly desired the unity of the church, consequently for any person, or any number of persons to introduce divisions was violently to divide the body of Christ, and by so doing to bring upon their heads the displeasure of God. It is just as true that contending congregations, out of sympathy with the Great Head of the church, destroy their spiritual power. This twelfth chapter of First Corinthians is full of suggestions to one who would understand what the Apostle believed concerning the organic unity of the church.

Should we for a moment assume that in this chapter the Apostle had in mind only the congregation in Corinth we would still be forced to the conviction that the chapter is a fervid plea for the organic unity of all the church. If it be so essential to the welfare of the church that in each little congregation there should be perfect unity are we not to suppose that it is at least just as essential that the different congregations should be in peace and unity with each other? This must mean a peace which enables them to abide in one body, in Christ, as an organic whole. As we recognize that for two Christians to quarrel, to anathematize each other, and to seek to cast each other out of the church, is a sinful, wicked thing, to increase the number to four, ten, twenty, five hundred, twenty thousand, an hundred thousand, instead of taking away the sin multiplies it manyfold. In such large companies the spirit of discord becomes so powerful as to be disastrous to the church. The evil done by the larger number is far greater when this divisive spirit appears, and such a course brings far greater dishonor upon the fair name of our Lord. Such a widespread dissention to a greater degree weakens the entire church.

The entire spirit of the New Testament is such as to impress upon the reader the transcendent obligation to love the brethren. This obligation is illustrated by the love of God for His servants. The First Epistle of John well sets forth the spirit of the Gospels. "Beloved, if God so loved us we ought also to love one

another." (I John IV:11.) In his Epistle to the Romans St. Paul employs a similar figure to the one which he used in Corinthians. In the same Epistle we find an exhortation to avoid divisions. For the brethren to cause divisions is to be disloyal to the church and to God. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and avoid them, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. XVI:17.) The same Apostle exhorts the Ephesians to "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. IV:3.) To the Colossians he writes, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body." (Col. III:15.)

As we read these, and similar passages, one instinctively raises the question, do these exhortations and commands simply apply to the persons addressed, or have they a wider bearing, applying with equal force to the men and church of all ages? Do these statements refer to local situations, or do we find in them the discussion of great fundamental principles which bear upon Christendom? The obligation to maintain the unity of the church rested upon the Apostolic Church. Did it rest, with equal force, upon the church of the third and fourth centuries? Is it true with us to-day, as St. Paul said it was with the church in his day, that the brethren among us who cause "divisions and offences, do so contrary to the doctrine" of the Gospels? Should Christians avoid them, "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ"? The way in which the Apostle puts the matter is certainly a very serious one. None of us are willing to be found opposing the teaching of St. Paul. His statements seem to accuse some of failing to keep the doctrine of Christ. Are we guilty? Are the guilty ones in the other denominations than our own? Shall we not possibly say that we are all guilty? Such reasoning carries with it serious accusations. It is certain that some one has missed the teachings of God. Some one, it would seem

from the Scriptures, has gone far astray. Who may it be? While it may be practically impossible in our day to answer this question, and probably it is scarcely wise to press it too far, we must still recognize this fact that the Apostles expected that in all ages there should be a spirit of forbearance. It seems clear from what St. Paul says that he expected that there would be but a single church, and that this would be an organic unit. It was to be one in doctrine and one in unity of the Spirit. This would be the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Provision was made so that if necessary, individuals might be excluded but the church must remain one.

In addition to the passages already referred to a strong spirit of church unity pervades all the books of the New Testament. Not even would the most zealous denominationalist for a moment attempt to maintain that the spirit of the New Testament books is a spirit of division or discord. The ideal is a unity so close and vital that when one member suffers all the members suffer with him, and when one rejoices all share in his joy, a unity, with a wise division of work, yet all working together as one body, each strengthening his neighbor, forms the ideal of the Apostolic Church. At that early period there were differences of view and much discussion concerning methods appears to have taken place yet none dared suggest a division. Despite all these differences in method and modifications of belief, the church remained one. Not simply one in name, not as is said to-day, one in spirit while dismembered outwardly, but one in outward form. One in organic existence. This outward unity was that for which Christ prayed. It was a unity which made the church really one. It was a unity which appealed to the pagan world. The Greek and Roman philosophers saw Judaism rent by schisms into many warring factions, and for a time supposed that Christianity was only one of these. Later, becoming better acquainted with the real nature of the church they recognized her as distinct from Juda-

ism, an organization by herself. During all the persecution the Roman government knew but a single organization and this was the church. As such, an undivided body of loyal believers she stood before the world, testifying of her Divine mission.

However we attempt to explain, or interpret these passages of Scripture, however we may endeavor to draw the sting from the spirit of the entire New Testament, however great may be our desire to justify the men whom we have been pleased to honor, esteeming them as rare men of God, who founded the particular branch of the church with which we happen to be connected, we must all admit that viewed through the Scriptures denominationalism has not only no ground upon which to stand, to say the least, it must be considered an unfortunate development. Whatever may be the explanation of Christ's sacerdotal prayer which one decides to accept, we must all unhesitatingly admit that the unfortunate multiplication of Christian sects can scarcely be the thing which Jesus hoped would come about. We would not expect to find anywhere, in any statement of Jesus, or in any of the Apostolic writings a single sentence which would in any measure justify the spirit of dissension which has brought into existence such a multitude of sects. On that last night before the crucifixion, that night when the Supper was established, and Jesus in the midst of the fragments of the Passover held communion with His disciples, that night when He gave His parting instructions, the night of Gethsemane, the bloody sweat, one of the greatest burdens which seem to weigh down His soul, crushing it to earth, was the dark shadow from the future encircling Him with its gloom. Do we go so far astray when we say it was the shadow of a divided church? The visions of disruptions, factions contentions which in coming days should rend His beloved church, crippling her power, bringing upon her the criticism of the world, this church for whose life He was about to suffer the agony of the cross, He saw in

future ages divided against herself, and the sight called forth the intense cry, found in that portion of the prayer, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." For a time that prayer was answered, but alas, the time came when no longer the piteous intercession of the Lord, on the brink of the tomb availed to hold His people together. The church, Christ's church for which He died, is broken into hundreds of fragments. These fragments are contending with each other. Madly we see them rush into each others way, jostling, crowding, elbowing their neighbors out, that some petty advantage may be gained. In this manner, manifesting a spirit so unlike the spirit of the Master the denominations are trying to convince the world that we are sent by the Father. We claim a kinship with the one Who came as the expression of Divine love. While contending in this unseemly manner, church against church, with remarkable nonchalance we proclaim abroad that despite every outward appearance to the contrary, that despite such evidence as the world clearly sees, bristling hostility at so many points, that despite our disputes, and harsh epithets which we hurl at each other, still there is a wonderful, a miraeulous work of the Holy Spirit going on in our midst. That while we are so violent in our disagreements that we cannot remain in the same organization, while we accuse each other of want of fidelity to the truth, there is still a most remarkable spirit of unity which binds in brotherly love the fragments of a quarrelling church. Our learned scholars take this prayer of our Lord and by the aid of lexicon and grammar assisted by logic and an overpowering desire tell us that on that memorable night Jesus had no especial desire for the external unity of His church, that He did not pray for it. There is something marvelous in human reason. Christ did pray that His church might be a unit, one, and such a unity as would be an evidence

to the world that the Father had sent Him. Just before this prayer He made a statement to His disciples which is full of significance. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John XIV: 27.)

CHAPTER X

AN OBLIGATION

HOWEVER we may view the condition of the church to-day as she is broken up into numberless disjointed fragments, the nature of which is somewhat concealed under the Latin derivative "Denominations," in every sober mind there must arise the conviction that something is radically wrong. Whenever in the past there has arisen such a difference of opinion, doctrinal, social or ecclesiastical that a division was threatened, without exception, those involved exhibited the greatest concern. In each instance there has preceded the division a series of efforts more or less prolonged, to arrive at some adjustment and thus, if possible, avoid disruption. Never yet has a break occurred in any organic church which has not been accompanied with expressions of regret and sorrow. Such disruptions, from the first, have been considered inexpressibly unfortunate. They have never been looked upon as an evidence of Divine blessing, as should have been the case, had they been instrumental in leading to that healthful and stimulating competition which resulted in a more vigorous religious life. It is probable that should we go back and in a careful, judicious spirit study afresh the records of these controversies we would in every instance discover that had the church leaders, and the leaders of the opposition been wise, had they been possessed of the genuine spirit of Christian forbearance, instead of an irascible, self-seeking spirit, the unfortunate separations would never have taken place. In the excitement of controversy men have assumed positions unwise, and extreme, from which they could not retreat

without a loss of some measure of popularity and a weakening of leadership, which they were unwilling to accept. Popular applause which is given to a leader in controversy, personal ambition, fired by such applause, the intoxication of leadership have combined to fan the fires of discontent until reaching the point of exploding the break followed. When under such conditions a break comes in a religious organization, there seems to be, at least in this world, no forgiveness. After such a break to surrender, even after the lapse of centuries seems like passing judgment upon the fathers who endured hardship in the cause of religious liberty. There seems to be in a measure in such a retreat, something disloyal to the fundamental idea of church life, something sacrilegious and cowardly. It is the making of a truce with our natural enemies. We find ourselves refusing to look upon the founders of our particular church in any other light than as saints of God, in whose breasts the fire of genuine faith burned brightly. To admit that the leaders in the founding of our denomination were at serious fault has come to be esteemed akin to an attack upon the fundamentals of Christianity. One would prefer to be supposed at fault in religious character rather than weak in denominational zeal. While deploring the misfortunes of schism we are unwilling that it should be assumed that any measure of the blame should possibly be laid at the door of our ecclesiastical ancestors. The Methodist Church can see in the Wesleys and their immediate followers only the holy zeal of godly men who because of their deep piety and evangelistic zeal were driven out of the established church. It is true that the Calvinists have never formally canonized their founder yet to all his loyal followers John Calvin is the saint par excellence. The name of Martin Luther is held so sacred by his followers that to produce a saying of this man, so wise and holy is he esteemed that at once it ends all controversy. But these men were mortals. They were subject to the weaknesses and frailties of the flesh,

to the same limitations of human reason as other mortals. There can be no question that had there been less of the controversialist in John Calvin and more of the humble spirit of Christ in Martin Luther Protestantism would not have been divided. It is not altogether impossible that had the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church at the opening of the sixteenth century, and the leaders of the Reformation been in more complete communion with the Great Head of the church the Reformation would have taken place, without a schism, and Protestantism would never have been born. But such a thought now can be only of what might have been. The Reformation did not take place without schism. Protestantism was born. Immediately upon her birth Protestantism sought to adjust herself to the times, and to take up the tasks which she believed were imposed upon her. As there was no one great leader, who was able to command the following of all sections, discord soon appeared. In Germany, Switzerland, at Geneva, were men of great intellects and mighty influence, each working independently of the others. The results, as might have been foreseen, were differences of opinion, and divergence in doctrine and methods. Efforts at agreement were made. All men, even the leaders, saw the mistake of such divisions, but not one would yield to the others, and efforts at union were futile. At last the great leaders disappeared, but their followers took the old controversies, fanned them to a whiter heat and passed them on to the coming generations. Since that time some three hundred years have passed during which the old battle has been sustained. To-day, while the original controversies have only a most indirect bearing upon the problems of State, society or even the church, with conscientious zeal we continue to fight the old battle. With great efforts, and expense, we struggle to maintain the old boundary lines. Now it is true that some one was responsible for the break which took so many thousand out of the Roman Catholic Church of Europe. It is equally true that in every

schism which since the original break has torn asunder the different families of Christendom, breaking up Protestantism into hundreds of sects there has been some one responsible. Those have lived who were responsible for a divided church. Those have lived who were responsible for a divided Protestantism. To-day as we look back it is too late to prevent the divisions. Neither those who were responsible for these disruptions, nor any one else can prevent them. The time when an adjustment was possible has passed. The golden opportunity came in every instance, for a moment it waited then passed forever, and a divided church, a shattered Protestantism became a fact. It was possible for Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldreich Zwingli, Pope Leo X, and the Cardinals and the Bishops of Rome to have prevented the unchristian split which came with the Reformation. The critical point was allowed to pass, and the disruption took place. Then it was too late to save the situation. Bad work was done and during the succeeding centuries the church has been paying dearly for her mistakes.

Protestantism came into being. The uncompromising spirit of its leaders, who had strong convictions, with hot tempers, led to more blunders. Not only did the larger divisions of Protestantism fail to unify, and come together but the spirit which prevented this led to the breaking up into other fragments. The saints now in glory, if possible, may shed bitter tears over the faults of the past, the church of our day may deplore the unfortunate situation but the fact exists that Protestantism is a divided host. It is as true in this as in all history, that what has already taken place cannot be prevented. The past has become history, and what is written is written. We cannot go back and change the facts.

Again, as from generation to generation between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches a bitter controversy has been kept up, as the sects of Protestantism have from age to age continued their warfare

some one must bear the responsibility. The men who may have felt sure that it was their duty to split the church have passed on. The present generation is now upon the field. We are maintaining the fight of the fathers. Shall we continue this? What shall be our attitude towards the contentions which the fathers started? Shall we, as did the fathers, and their immediate followers, diligently study the means by which the fight may be carried on, and our sect gain some advantage? Shall it be our policy to win out, as a denomination? Or shall we seek more peaceful methods, and strive to find some way in which there may come a reconciliation? The responsibility of the past rests upon the men of the past. The responsibility of the present rests upon the men of to-day. The present generation is not responsible for what a past generation may have done. The church came to our hands just as we found it, a divided Protestantism. Shall we accept this condition, and seek to continue it as it came to us, a church divided into factions, denominations, filled with unrest, a heritage of conflict, a kind of religious warfare, and pass on to the next generation, the same kind of a divided, struggling mass of religious combatants? If we do this how much better are we than the fathers who split the church? If we keep up the old battle, if we neglect any opportunity to bring the warfare to a close, and establish a universal peace in Christ's kingdom we are guilty of precisely the same sin as those who divided the church. There comes to us of this generation an obligation. Is it an obligation to continue the fight?

In a splendid manner, Christians in our day are recognizing certain great obligations which rest upon Christendom as a whole. It is not probable that for many generations the church, as such, has been as conscious of her obligation to extend help to the world, as to-day. In our country this consciousness is manifest both in the efforts to evangelize our own population, and to render aid to the multitudes who come to our shores from distant lands. We have arrived at the point where

we recognize this obligation as resting not so much upon us as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and Lutherans, but as a great religious obligation appealing to the great church of Christ. As this consciousness has grown up and our leaders have caught clearer views of the great whitening harvest, ready for the sickle, the duty of preaching the Gospel to every creature has gained in strength. As this has come about the term church of Christ, in its first significance, of universality, is more frequently employed. The time has come when no one denomination assumes to be the sole possessor of the mystery of godliness. No one denomination to-day is alone considered as receiving that commandment to go into all the world and evangelize every creature. The very vastness of the work to be done has made the denominations willing to recognize a kind of universal responsibility. Such a recognition has led to a drawing towards each other on the part of the denominations. The fact that the various denominations are engaged in the work of Foreign Missions, for example in India, and by unintentional interferences each with the others so complicated the work as to render the relation most embarrassing made evident the need of some kind of an understanding between the different churches. This led to conferences on the part of church officials, and at last resulted in a friendly arrangement. The various denominations have divided the Foreign field in such a manner as to reduce these interferences. Common questions have arisen from time to time making necessary inter-church conferences. It has been necessary not only to discuss questions of relationship which were vexing the missionaries, but to reach some agreement whereby these vexations might be obviated. A similar need has been sorely felt in the home work. Here the prejudices have been so strong that adjustments have been much slower, and less complete. These conferences and discussions, necessitating a closer association of church leaders in a friendly spirit have brought to pass

the use of the term *church* in a manner unknown to Protestantism for centuries. We are using the word in a universal sense, not as including all true believers, alone, but as including all evangelical denominations and organizations. Very few to-day would restrict the term church to a single denomination. The great Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in June, 1910, where the Protestant Churches of Europe and America assembled in a single gathering to discuss the obligation to evangelize the world and to render this work more effective by the adoption of better methods, is an illustration of the trend of the church of our day. This gathering presents not only the recognition of common interests among the denominations, but whoever has read the nine volumes which contain the report of this gathering has felt how to a remarkable degree that a spirit of unity pervaded the assembly. There was an evident zeal for the fundamentals in Christian faith which unmistakably emphasized the felt need of some kind of real unity in Protestant Christianity. This was shown by the movement to establish Christian but undenominational colleges, and the common training school for the missionaries. There was an undercurrent of conviction resting upon Protestantism that the time was not far distant when there would appear an irresistible demand that such a working together should be found not alone in the Foreign field, but in the home land. In nearly every report of every Commission there was a cry of unutterable sadness, an implied longing for a coming together of the dispersed hosts of the Kingdom. In this and in similar gatherings of less magnitude we have the acknowledgment on the part of various denominations, an open recognition of an obligation resting upon all Christian churches, to strive to come together. On the part of some churches there is already evident a growing conviction that these conferences do not wholly discharge our obligation in the line of union. There is another and some think an even greater obligation, which is knocking at the door of Protestantism. There has

slowly developed a conviction that if the successful carrying on of our work demands such conferences, why should there not be so close a relation as to render them unnecessary? If the separate denominations can come together in such gatherings and discuss so many questions to their mutual advantage, why should there not be in Christian work and administration a still closer relation? Why should not the church of Christ be one? Why should not our work, both in Foreign lands and at home have the benefit of a united front? This conviction has grown so strong and is becoming so common that several denominations commenced to consider various schemes tending to a final organic union. Attempts, not wholly unsuccessful, have been made at union. One church has gone so far as to overture all other churches to consider the feasibility of a union. In Canada three of the leading denominations for several years have been seriously engaged in an effort to form a union. Questions arise on every side, which, despite all efforts to the contrary, seem forcing before every community the question of a greater unity among the churches. The obligation to live together in peace is being recognized. If it be true, as we tacitly admit by our efforts at federation and our discussion of combinations, that our denominationalism is a misfortune, that it is an evil, a pernicious drawback in the developing of the kingdom of God, then it is something which ought to be remedied. Under such conditions the churches ought to come together. They are under obligation to unite. It is time that this obligation should be recognized. There certainly confronts the church to-day the obligation to face this question of unity. If all the different churches in Europe and America, both at home and in Foreign lands, are striving to teach the same gospel, if all these organizations are holding before men everywhere the necessity of the same kind of repentance for the same kind of sin, and urging the same kind of faith in the same kind of a Saviour, then why should they not come together? Would not the

gain arising from such a union more than a thousand times compensate for any surrender of some personal opinion or taste which individuals or denominations might be required to make? If in the home land we find in all these churches in their places of worship the same sacred books are being read, if we find presented the same fundamental doctrines of faith, repentance, righteousness, service, if they all pray to the same Almighty God, in the name of the same Redeemer, for the same help, and give thanks for the same blessings, if they join in the same hymns of praise and worship, is it strange that the members of these churches, as well as the outside world, are beginning to ask what difference does it make with a man in his life in this world, or with his condition in the next, whether he be a Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian? Is it not true, and must we not recognize the fact, that a man can lead just as devout and consecrated a life in the Episcopal Church as in the Presbyterian, in the Lutheran as in the Baptist? But we may go a step further. The time has actually come when the members of any one of these churches will readily admit that the members of any other church are just as truly saved through the blood of Christ as the members of their own. While the Episcopalian may cling to the service of his church, and the Baptist finds special comfort in his immersion, while the Methodist proclaims the doctrine of free salvation, and finds comfort in the doctrine of falling from grace, and the Presbyterian stands firm on predestination and the perseverance of the saints, while the Congregationalist may remain convinced of the autonomy of the individual congregation, is the only Biblical form of Church government, still there is no church in all Protestantism which will say that salvation is not just as truly found in all the other churches. No one of the leaders of any of these churches would for a moment care to raise a single question concerning either the genuineness of the faith or the value of the religion of the other churches. The doctrines wherein the churches

differ in no marked degree neither affect the personal life of the believer, nor have any essential bearing upon his acceptability at the throne of God. Everything which is essential to the saving of the lost soul, and the building up of a strong, godly life, is the common faith of all the churches. This is one of the undisputed facts of the situation. Another fact stares us in the face, that Christianity is divided and subdivided not for the sake of convenience and efficiency, like the division in an army, or in a government, but rather like a contentious house, because of quarrels and disagreement. Were these fragments not hostile they would easily come together. It is said that they cannot come together, and such an admission is a confession of the hostile and sinful nature of the separation. They live apart because they cannot agree. If they come into the same organization they would fight, therefore to live apart is to promote the peace of the church. This kind of spirit is not the spirit of Christ. For children to conduct themselves in such a manner would incur punishment by their parents. It is not less childish and evil for Christians to live in such a state.

Impressed by what appears to us to be a want of a true Christian spirit, some of us might say this is all wrong. We will no longer continue this unchristian policy of denominationalism. Suppose that we say we are ready to bury all our petty preferences and unite with any church holding loyally to the essential doctrines of the Bible, what can we do? Suppose that fifty Presbyterians, or a thousand, should go to the Episcopal Church saying we are heartily sick of the spirit of denominationalism, let us come in with you? Would this in any measure break down denominationalism? Suppose a thousand Episcopalians should go over to the Congregational body, in the spirit of brotherly love, and form an independent Congregational Church, or five hundred Baptists in a similar manner should go over to the Methodist Church, such movements would not affect denominationalism. After such changes had taken place

just as many denominations would remain as before. Such movements would demoralize benevolent and missionary work, as well as the congregational activities of each church. While there is an individual obligation extending as far as personal influence reaches the real obligation in the case is with the denomination as a body. The organization as such must make the move. To diminish the number of denominations two of these bodies must combine.

A few years ago there was a movement among the leaders of the Presbyterian and the Cumberland Presbyterian bodies for a union. Through committees the details were arranged and the two denominations tried to come together. A fragment of the Cumberland Church refused to follow, so that enough remained to continue the name Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and to keep the number of organizations unchanged. In 1835 the Presbyterian Church split into what is known as the Old and New School Presbyterian bodies. For thirty-five years these two branches remained apart. After much and prolonged effort in 1870 a reunion took place, which resulted in wiping out of existence one denomination. These were denominational movements. The consummation of this union was the occasion of great rejoicing in both bodies. These efforts, and the rejoicing over their success, indicate how the church of to-day really looks upon church divisions. When the leaders of these bodies realized what should be done, and went to work in earnest, they brought forth most gratifying results. In a similar manner every great denomination is responsible for its position with relation to other bodies. The organization which holds a denomination together, enabling it to do its work is the place in the church where the responsibility for denominationalism lies. There is an obligation resting upon the supreme governing or controlling body of every church, and upon her officials, to put forth every reasonable effort to lead that church organization into the right position concerning the organic unity of the entire body of

Christians. This is where the responsibility for doctrinal positions rest. Here lies the obligation for the outlining of the work, both at home and abroad. It is here where the relation between the given organization and all other religious organizations is determined. Shall the given organization be on terms of peace or hostility towards the other churches? It is for the ruling body in the denomination to determine. Suppose a member of a Methodist Church should remove to another town and present a letter of dismissal from his church to a Presbyterian Church? Shall he be received on this letter? This is determined by the highest court in the Presbyterian Church. In a similar manner all obligations which bear upon the relation of Presbyterians to other bodies rests in this court. Such an obligation cannot be ignored. It is therefore important that this place of influence in all our churches should represent the most devout, consecrated, and intelligent manhood of the church. These persons, who are in such places of power, are in a very large measure responsible to-day for the continuation of the unfortunate divisions of Christendom. While the guilt of making the divisions may not be charged to them, unless they use their influence, and their authority, so far as they possess it, to heal the breaks they must bear the responsibility of maintaining them.

One of the obligations resting upon the ecclesiastical organization is to define the conditions of church membership. This may be so defined as to exclude from its membership nine-tenths of those who are admitted to be genuine followers of Christ. It is recognized that these persons are truly penitent, that they have genuine faith in Christ and that they are leading excellent and active Christian lives. By the action of the ruling body such are deprived from finding a religious home within the ranks of this denomination because of some imposed conditions. It is true that nearly all Protestant denominations to-day receive their members upon very generous conditions. Little is made of doctrinal belief beyond

personal faith in Christ and a suitable well-ordered life. Whether a man enter a Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran or any other church, practically the same elements of faith are expected. All churches require the same kind of faith, and the same holy life; all practice Baptism, though some restrict the mode to a single form. All churches administer the Sacrament of the Supper in practically the same form, so far as the essentials of faith go, in the same manner. There is scarcely a difference in the holy life which the Christian is expected to live. To be a Christian is the same thing, whether defined by a Bishop in the Episcopal Church, a Bishop in the Methodist Church, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, a Lutheran Synod, or a Congregational Council. With no essential modification of creed, or change of life, a layman may pass from membership in one of these denominations to any other. Whatever differences exist, therefore, among these denominations are of such a nature as to have no effect upon the character or spiritual life of their members. Such a statement rests not upon any argument, but is based upon the fact that it is admitted in the practice of all these organizations. Upon the same conditions a man may enter any of the leading denominations which he may select, and without embarrassment. This forces us face to face with this important question, Upon what, then, does denominational differences rest? To be consistent with the positions of the different denominations it would be necessary to exclude from her membership every person who could not subscribe to her creed, in which must be found the distinctive things which distinguishes this church from all others. We have a right to judge what the real conviction of the denomination is by her practice, and so we unhesitatingly affirm that, so far as salvation and Christian character may be concerned, the various denominations really believe that it does not matter what church a man joins. The special creed of the individual denomination is a mere nominal thing, and is a question of little importance. These

dividing questions mostly belong to philosophy and are far from vital in Christianity. They affect the external methods of the church and have little influence over the life of the Christian.

It is furthermore evident that Christians, members of the different churches do not consider these restrictions as of any real obligation upon themselves. Years ago the writer was the pastor for a year of a Congregational church in northern Vermont. As such, it became his duty, upon the reception of members to read to the candidate the creed of the church, to which the would-be member was expected to assent. This creed involved the entire system of Calvinism. One question, as an illustration, required the candidate to accept as an article of faith "Creationism," another "Infralapsarianism" and several others equally essential to a vital Christian life. It was certain that there was not a single member who had even a faint idea of many of the things to which he professed to subscribe. All they could say was that it had been the creed of the church for years, that minister after minister, according to the regulation of the church, had read the creed to candidates and they had cordially accepted it in the blind assurance that in a document of so profound a nature, and so distinctive of Congregationalism, there must be a mysterious virtue which made a man a stronger Christian. While such doctrines may have a place in religious philosophy, and be interesting as matters of speculation, they held no very essential place in the character and experience of the members of that church. Most of the distinctive doctrines which divide ecclesiastical organizations are about as essential to real robust religious living as are the doctrines above referred to. It is also true that the leaders of the church admit that such doctrines are not essential, that they are not of sufficient importance so that the church needs to go to the trouble of teaching them to her members. If this be true, and the practice of all our churches show that it is, then why should such questions be permitted to divide the church? There is

an obligation resting upon the denominational leaders to see that divisions, based upon such grounds, shall cease to interfere with the work of the church. That the kingdom of God should be divided by such questions as these, and the church of Christ should be rent asunder by quarrels over such matters can certainly be nothing short of positive sin. It is time that prominent Christian men in our churches should cease to quibble over theories and speculations and strive to build up a strong, manly piety, which shall exemplify true Christian brotherhood. It certainly is high time that the obligation to set matters right should be recognized in such a way as to lead to action. As we study our differences to-day and see how the body of Christ is divided over insignificant questions into hundreds of more or less hostile camps, there arises a fear that we may be approaching dangerously near to the position held by the sect of Pharisees in our Lord's time. In their endeavor to do all that the Law required, they entered into the minutest details of life, fixing with rigid rules every act during the day, from the awaking from sleep at sunrise until at the close of day the weary worshipper lost consciousness in slumber. The number of steps which could be taken before washing the face in the morning, the exact manner in which he should wash his hands, which hand he should wash first, just how far he could go before offering a certain prayer, how he should put on each garment with the accompanying prayer, all were fixed by Law. This had been reached after laborious discussions, careful examinations and profound argument. Christ cast aside not a few of these worse than useless observances, as really in the way of a genuine life of holiness. Should He come again might He not deal in a similar manner with some of the bonds with which we are binding the church? These non-essentials have been so emphasized as to lead to denominations. The spirit of these divisions, denominations, dominate our church work and life. Were the non-essentials put aside and only such things retained in

our creeds as are essential to true godliness, there is not the slightest reason why the rank and file of our churches could not peacefully and profitably live in a single organization. Take a concrete case. In a certain one of our smaller cities is a Presbyterian Church. Among its members, received both by letter and on confession of faith, we find Baptists, Methodists, United Brethren, Lutherans, Disciples, Congregationalists, Members from the Church of God, German Reformed, United Presbyterians, Reformed Presbyterians, in fact there are members in that church from nearly every form of denomination in existence. In this particular this church does not differ from hundreds of others. Nearly every church to-day is made up of persons who at some time have been members of other organizations. When a Presbyterian or a Methodist removes from one city to another no one can safely predict with what denomination he will connect himself. The acquaintance formed by the children in the public school, or on the street, goes farther, with the average family, to settle the church home than any question of doctrine. It seems to be true that the people who compose our churches care very little concerning denominational lines. They have in their own minds practically settled the question which is fundamental in the organic unity of the church. The people, our church members, especially the younger men and women, together with those persons who are doing the larger part of our religious work, are saying in their lives that it is immaterial what the church may be, provided it be thoroughly loyal to the Word of God. It must be a true Christian church. If it be this they hesitate but little to enter it, whatever name it may bear.

This throws the responsibility of maintaining the denomination back upon the organization. Shall this particular denomination be maintained as a separate distinct institution after the majority of its members find themselves able to enter other organizations without inconvenience? If the individual members are able to

pass thus freely from one denomination to another, when the leaders of a denomination are ready to prepare the way, we may safely assume that the great mass of the people will gladly follow. The leaders are therefore responsible for the continuance of the denominations. The least that the great denominations can do is to give this question of union an immediate, prayerful and careful consideration. If the Scriptures indicate that it was in the mind of our Lord that His church should be one, if in our study of the prayer of Jesus we have arrived at a correct conclusion, if St. Paul meant what he said in his Epistle to the Romans and to the Corinthians, if it be true of Christians to-day that the members of the church could live together in one organization, then there is surely an obligation resting somewhere upon some one to take up this matter of church divisions and seek such a settlement as shall remove this greatest of all hindrances to the progress of the kingdom of God, modern denominationalism. The unfortunate differences of the fathers weakened the church by breaking her up into a multitude of sects. The continuance of these differences cannot be maintained without the responsibility for such a course falling heavily upon the shoulders of our leaders. To fail to make an effort to secure union is a serious fault. It is not enough that we contentedly remain in the church in which we find ourselves, we must seek to diminish the number of organizations. There are more important questions than those of denominational success. Even the question of denominational consistency pales in the presence of the great obligation that we should be one and live in peace. The church, the denomination has no right to exist for the sake of maintaining the principles for which its founders contended, its chief aim should be not its own continuation, if it be true to Christ, but something far wider, and infinitely more essential to the honor of God. It should be the unity of the church and the glory of the Living God which should lead us in our study of the problems of the day.

There can be no question that if the differences which exist among us can be so adjusted that greater harmony may prevail in the church that her leaders are bound by every law of right, by the strongest obligations to the Great Head of the church to put aside the discussion of our differences, to cease trifling with side issues, and to meet seriously the great question. We ought to agree. If we cannot it is because some one of us is wrong and is at fault in this matter. It is our duty to agree upon the great essentials. We can agree, if we will. There remains but one thing to do, and that is as speedily as possible cease our quibbling and get together. Let the unfortunate antagonisms which for so many centuries have violently rent the church to tatters cease. It is high time that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ should cease to appear before the world as a house divided against itself.

CHAPTER XI

A DUTY

ONE of the unfailing laws inherent in the nature of things is that each generation must reap the sowing of the generations which have preceded. This holds not alone with respect to the good and wise acts, but with equal force with respect to the evils resulting from mistakes made. Each generation has forced upon it much which comes from the past. Fortunately there is much in this inheritance which is wholesome and gives a great advantage over the past. We have received great aid from the inventions of those who have gone before, and the material and intellectual progress which they have made. For all this we are duly grateful. This, unfortunately, is not all. We have entered into situations and conditions resulting from the blunders of the fathers which form in no small measure the burdens which we must carry and the intricate problems which we must solve. The inheritance of the church of our day from the past is indescribably great. The highly organized state of the church, the developed missionary work, and the doctrinal and social developments, which give strength to Christianity, we have received from the past. The liturgical part of the services of the church comes to us from the fathers. Nearly all that is excellent and which gives stability to the church comes to us from the past. It is also true that not a few of the elements of weakness which are found in the church of the present, and which not only embarrass the church in her forward progress, but which hold the great body of believers in fetters of steel, is a part of our inheritance. Not the least of these weaknesses we must admit is our

present day denominationalism. It would appear that it was the genius of Protestantism to fall into contentions of such a nature as to result in a sad dismemberment. Before the reformers were free from the mother church and her restraints serious and far-reaching differences arose. The age of the Reformation passed. These differences instead of becoming adjusted took on more aggravated forms. Discord, contention, and disunion resulted. The generation following the Reformers took up their work. Despite all efforts to heal the schisms the trouble increased and disruptions multiplied. From generation to generation, while now and then feeble efforts have been made to settle differences, there has followed a long succession of breaks resulting in denominations. Nearly every question which has arisen since the sixteenth century in the Protestant Church, even such movements as were meant to lead the church to a purer and higher level of religious living, has resulted in difference of opinion, which has been aggravated, and then was followed by an explosion which gave a new brood of separate denominations. In later times this tendency has manifested itself in a new and strange characteristic, a remarkable readiness on the part of church people to run off into a variety of religious and quasi-religious organizations, utterly at variance with the spirit or nature of the church. Some think that this indicates that the church, as such, in a measure is losing her grip upon the lives and affections even of her own members. Infidelity and irreligion have grown bold in making their demands in the social life of communities, in transforming municipal administration and in revolutionizing even the fundamental principles of national government. Those interested in true religion should seek, with care, for the cause of these tendencies. It may not be entirely beside the mark to enquire how far the inharmonious state of the Protestant Church may be responsible for such a condition. Are we reaping, in the social and civil life, the fruit of the ecclesiastical sowing of the past? The question is a fair one.

It is cheering to note that within the last thirty years there has been manifested an increased desire, quite general in the church, to put an end to disintegration, and if possible to bring about some wholesome combinations. However reluctant to do so, men have been forced to recognize some of the ill effects of our present inharmonious state. There has been a growing disposition not to emphasize so strongly our differences, while attention has been directed to the points of agreement. Out of this has grown an increasing desire on the part of a large body in the church for some kind of union whereby the various denominations may become one. Some, in the conviction that it is too much to hope for anything like organic unity, advocate a federation. Among the clergy of the various denominations there has developed a fraternal spirit which readily feels a sense of brotherhood. We begin to see visions in the future of some sort of a united church, which shall enter upon a reign of universal religious peace. Still, while entertaining such a hope, we contentedly remain within the vise-like grip of denominationalism. Under such conditions it is not strange that here and there men should arise who press the question concerning the duty of the church. The church has a duty to perform. She should recognize it.

We must admit that in a very large measure the church, and the church alone, is to blame for the present situation. We cannot censure the outside world for our divided state. It is scarcely reasonable that the church of to-day should attempt to throw the responsibility for our present differences upon the men of yesterday. The church, in accordance with the spirit of Christianity, condemns that harboring of family feuds, which leads the son to carry on the quarrel of the father. If there were differences in the past, which have come to us unhealed, then instead of continuing the fight, why should we not make overtures of peace? If denominations have been formed in the past, shall we continue the feud in our day, keeping up the fight, and

maintain our separate church organizations? In the day of the Reformation the followers of Luther and Calvin were responsible for refusing to come together. In the following years those forming new denominations were responsible for the splits. Now who must bear the responsibility for the continuance of these splits? If the splits were a mistake, if they were wrong, then the maintaining of the divisions is a mistake, is wrong. The fathers who made the first mistake did the first wrong, and divided. They are gone. Shall we repair their mistakes or fight the battle out to the bitter end? When this generation commenced its religious activity it began in the conditions which were made for it. But after years, if the old conditions remain, then certainly the fathers cannot be censured. The men of this generation have resting upon them the duty of doing what needs to be done to-day. If there ought to be a union among the various denominations the duty to bring about such a union rests upon men who are now living. The church of to-day has a duty, and she must not run away and leave it. We must not content ourselves by saying that we are the children whose teeth have been set on edge by the sour grapes which the fathers ate, while we continue eating the sour grapes. While we did not originate the denominations we may not wash our hands of all responsibility for their continuance. We may claim that we did not start the quarrel, but we keep it up. The church's duty to-day is not so much with reference to the forming of denominations, this evil has been accomplished. The present duty is with reference to the continuance of the denominations. We may compare our situation to a city which is situated on the border of a swamp, where malaria and disease carry off the inhabitants by the hundreds. It is true that we did not locate the city, the fathers did this. We did not make the swamps, the fathers found these. We did not introduce the mosquitoes, these come from the swamps. But can we say that no duty devolves upon us? Shall we sit quietly and do nothing while men die by the hun-

dreds? It is the duty of the men of to-day to do something to improve the health of this city. In some manner the mosquitoes must be exterminated. It is the duty of the men of the city to do this. Failing in this they become guilty for their course, and are responsible for the hundreds of lives which are lost. In a similar manner, we may say the Christians of to-day did not make the swamps, nor import the mosquitoes, but we live on and do nothing to change the devastating influence of the malaria of denominationalism. The church has a duty to perform. We cannot accept the situation and go on. We must do something. Duty demands it. Our situation is peculiar. Unless we take heed to our course, meeting the duty of the hour, some one may arise, and not inappropriately apply to us the language addressed by our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees of His day, "Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore be ye witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." (Matt. XXIII: 29-31.)

It is first clearly our duty to give this subject of denominationalism and its influence upon the Kingdom of God in this world, and its progress, together with the only real and sufficient remedy, organic union, a most serious study. This subject has forced itself before the church as at no time since the Reformation. Embarrassed by its influences, as we seek to extend the Kingdom, as the fathers never were, we are beginning to question the nature and influence of our divisions. In many, in fact in most of our mission fields, it has become necessary to put aside the customs of the home country, and to permit the churches in a large measure to enter into a unity. Where churches have refused to do this it has been necessary to segregate and go into regions so far separated that the real nature of our divided church may not appear to the degraded

heathen. It is really embarrassing to permit the natives of one of these regions of a single church to go over into a region occupied by another church. We are still more embarrassed when these natives come to the home land and see the situation here, among those who have been so impressed by the Gospel of Infinite love, that we send our messengers to the end of the world, that He and His love may be known. The strange sight makes the heathen, whether a convert or not, ask, Is all this zeal in the interest of unselfish love, or the outgoing of a zeal in propagating a sect? They are familiar with sects in religion, and the mischief which grows out of them. We must find some way of changing this condition.

An endeavor has been made to diminish the wastefulness of our present system of denominational interference and competition. The extravagance of maintaining six or eight little struggling churches where one could do the work far better has been recognized by shrewd business men as exceedingly unwise, if not absolutely unchristian. It is unquestionably the duty of the denominations involved in this to do something to remedy the situation. For a church to assume that she is so busy in her task of preaching the Gospel that she has not time to study such questions, while she squanders the Lord's money in these inglorious contentions, seems wanting in candor. It is illogical, it is worse than folly for a church to go on in such a course, wasting her treasure and interfering with the efficiency of the efforts of her brethren, without seeking at whatever sacrifice may be necessary to remove the evils. If we should employ the same number of workmen, distributed in places where they might be most needed, and would work to greatest advantage, with the men already at work, and the money already employed, we could reach all the untouched fields with their hundreds of millions who have never heard the Gospel, and could have the men in these fields within the next six months. Without an additional dollar of expense, or the employment

of any additional men, we could place a missionary in every community in the world, as a messenger of Christ. But we keep the great host of men at home, that we may propagate the quarrels which our fathers started, and the millions in heathenism may go down to hopeless graves, lost souls. We refuse to budge an inch, for we are bound to push our denominational work at home. This is all wrong. The church of God has a duty to perform, and we are turning our backs upon it. While we keep up our fight at home, maintaining our denominations, trying to keep six and seven churches going where one could do the work far better, so that Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and men of the various denominations may have preachers bearing the same denominational stamp, there are hundreds of millions of souls going into eternity, without as much as once hearing of Christ. Just as sure as there is a God in heaven some one will have to answer for such a course. If through our present extravagant, divisive methods millions of souls go into eternity, unprepared, who might have been reached by the Gospel, had we ceased our wrangling, and lived like brothers, then if God deal with us in Justice the blood of these souls will rest upon our heads. How can we escape? The duty is as plain as daylight.

This situation is accounted for, and excused, by saying that the denominations have such radical differences that they cannot agree. We are sometimes told that divided as we seem to be we are really much closer together than we would be were we all in a single organization. The impression goes out that should the Christians of the various denominations be brought together in a single organization by any process of organic unity, the inevitable result would be dire disaster. There is the intimation that if these people of such divergence of views were forced to worship in the same organization they would fight like fiends. It is better to deal with them as we would with beasts, keep them in separate compartments when they worship. But we profess to

be disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, we profess to be men who are willing to deny ourselves and take up the cross daily, men whose hearts have felt the warm breath of the Saviour's love, yet if brought into the same organization we will fight each other like vicious dogs. No, we say, keep us apart. Now it must be admitted that such reasoning sounds somewhat strange to modern ears, especially to Protestant ears. But we must also admit that the situation which exists among the denominations apparently justifies such assertions. Is there not a duty here somewhere?

If the situation be in anywise like this which we have found, it is but fair that we raise the question, Is there any particular element in the church responsible? If there be it is the duty of this element to do something, and at once.

First let us ask, Are the members of the church ready for church unity? Judging from the conduct of the average church member, we believe that we are justified in our conclusion that they are. We base this statement upon such facts as lie open before all the world. We find them in every community and practically in every Protestant Church. The ease with which families pass from one denomination to another, whenever the home is changed from one community to another, is a living proof that the people are ready for unity. Let the members of any church move to a large city or to a different section of the city, and with what denomination they will affiliate can with no degree of certainty be determined. Our church membership has already arrived at the place where the average man or woman can feel about as much at home in one denomination as another. More depends upon the pastor, or some circumstance, than upon the denomination as to where a given family will find a church home.

If we turn to the officers of our church we are surprised to find in nearly every church organization in the larger communities how large a proportion of the officials were trained in other denominations than in the

one in which they are now members. In most of the small cities where there has been a moving to town of country families we find the church boards a medley of denominations. Men who are leaders in local churches, upon removing to other places, determine their church affiliation largely by other considerations than strictly denominational. Even in the ministry it is surprising with what ease good men pass from one denomination to another. Methodists, Congregationalists, Reformed, Presbyterians, are frequently going from one denomination to another. It is surprising how little doctrinal embarrassment such changes involve. We are surprised to see how slight a grip the questions which a short time ago were esteemed the great decisive principles of the church now appear to have upon men of unquestioned standing in the denominations. For a Methodist minister to pass from a church holding the Arminian theological position to a Congregational, or even a Presbyterian Church, which is strictly Calvinistic, to-day causes little surprise. Despite the efforts of our Theological Schools, our educational institutions and our church periodicals denominational lines, doctrinal distinctions, and ecclesiastical traditions year by year are becoming more and more indistinct. When we remember that the former disruptions took place over these very questions we cannot help asking, What does the changed attitude mean? There certainly has been a changed attitude of mind with respect to theological questions, so largely based upon philosophical positions within the last few years. The church of to-day must have something other than a theological shibboleth. Ecclesiastical bodies cannot longer hold men by such bonds.

Suppose we go to men who have changed their denominational allegiance and ask why they made the change; seldom will they give a doctrinal or ecclesiastical basis. In these particulars they seem to have experienced no change. They have been led by social, family or personal considerations. If we question the ministers who have passed from one denomination to another

we will generally find that they have done so not because of any conscious doctrinal change. Now these facts indicate that when changes can be made so easily, and with such slight modification of views from one denomination to another, there could be no great hardship should the great mass of the ministry be brought under a single creed. The indications are that for the average minister to pass from one type of church government to another would involve very little difficulty. The newness of the situation would be the greatest embarrassment.

Under such conditions one is led to enquire, Why should there be so many denominations? Where rests the responsibility for such a condition to-day? In discussing this question one subjects himself to the danger of exposing himself to the charge of unfairness. The question should, however, at any risk, be discussed. It is probable that most of those who are opposing the organic union of the church may be placed under one of three classes. First, there is a class of men, somewhat advanced in years, who have served their church and denomination most faithfully, who are still pillars in the house of God and are performing a noble service. For years they have been leaders in the ecclesiastical bodies with which they are connected, and are skilled in the interpretation and application of the Law of their denomination. They have labored in season and out of season, have given their lives to the upbuilding and strengthening of their particular church. Their long service, frequent and great self-denials, have developed the warmest attachment for the organization with which they have been connected. It is possible that some of them would never feel at home in any other body than where they have so faithfully served. While this marked affection has been developing, while the self-sacrifice has been made and the honest efforts put forth to push their church ahead, another spirit has been imperceptibly gaining a hold upon them, a want of sympathy for the competing denominations. We find not infrequently

this spirit growing up between the members of two churches of the same denomination in the same neighborhood. The close competition which arises where two congregations draw their strength from the same constituency, instinctively seems to develop the conviction, though it may not be expressed, that the competing church is an enemy. When the competition is close, it produces hostility. When persons in one church learn of the embarrassments which overtake their competitor there is experienced a secret pleasure, and not unfrequently extraordinary efforts are put forth during this season of difficulty that some of the disaffected may be won over. Such persons are recognized as genuine Christians, true servants of Christ, but weak human nature asserts itself. It is not improbable that such leaders in the individual congregation would feel that any merging of their church with the church which for so long a time has been so hard a competitor would be no easy task.

We find men in all the ecclesiastical organizations, such as Conferences, Presbyteries and Synods, those branches of the organization next above the individual church, who have for years been leaders in these organizations. As such they have become interested in groups of churches which have come under their oversight, they have shared in the responsibility of providing support for the weaker fields, and in this way have developed a warm denominational interest, until there has come a sense of personal ownership. They look upon these fields as a father looks upon his children. They have become so familiar with the law and manner of doing work in their denomination that they can see no other legitimate way in which the work should be done, and to modify, even slightly, their mode of work would seem like attacking the citadel of heaven. It is not impossible that such never would feel themselves at home in any other organization than the one in which they have labored. These men have been brought into close touch with the work of their denomination. They know well

the embarrassments which have arisen from the overchurhing of communities. While there would be sacrifice on their part of such persons, while from the nature of the ease they would no longer stand as leaders, it is probable that from such, while there might be opposition to organic unity, it would be less determined than at first might be expected.

The second class from which opposition might be expected are the teachers of the church. In the present situation the denominational school and college, with the Theological Seminary, are a necessity. In these institutions are men who have devoted their lives, many of them at a real sacrifice, to this particular work of training men. From the circumstances of their positions they have given special study to denominational history, denominational doctrines, to methods of denominational administration. It has been their place to defend denominational peculiarities from every kind of attack from without, and to present the best and strongest elements of denominational character found in their distinctive church. Upon these men have devolved the duty of stirring up denominational zeal. They have devoted themselves so long, and so exclusively to this particular field of investigation and labor, that, like men in non-sectarian institutions in their departments, they have naturally, almost necessarily, come to esteem their distinctive department as excelling every other in importance. It has been their place to man the outposts of their denominational fortifications and to repel every advancing foe to denominational life. There is an all-controlling tendency in every department of teaching to appreciate the importance of the truth of the given department, whether it be literature, history, science, belles lettres, philosophy dogmatics, church polity or apologetics, until the teacher is sure that nowhere is there a realm of truth so essential to the welfare of mankind as that which it is his place to teach. These instructors become specialists in their departments. Such specialists become keen of scent in the search for facts

in their line, but suffer a corresponding blunting of perception in other directions. We may illustrate by a case which occurred in the science of medicine. Some years ago a friend was troubled with a peculiar kind of severe nervous headaches. His affliction became so severe as to render him unfit for business. Being in one of the large eastern cities on business, he consulted one of the leading specialists in nervous diseases. The doctor gave him a thorough examination and explained the cause of all his trouble. He gave him a course of treatment. As he derived no benefit, and was growing worse, he decided to try another physician. He was greatly afflicted with indigestion and insomnia. He went to a specialist in stomach diseases. This time the trouble was located. The entire trouble was in the stomach. He took a course of treatment under the direction of this specialist. But as he did not find relief, after a somewhat prolonged treatment he returned to his home, in a small country village, discouraged. He thought his case was beyond the reach of the doctor's skill. The men whom he had consulted were known throughout the country as the best in the land. He called in the family physician, who was a man of no pretensions, but a good, honest, skillful doctor. In a short time after a careful examination this doctor suggested that the trouble was with his eyes, and asked him to visit Albany, N. Y., and consult a certain famous oculist. He was examined. The doctor found his eyes faulty and after a brief treatment gave him some glasses. The doctor told him to go home, and all would be well. He went home. His headaches ceased, his digestion improved, and his nervous condition passed away. He was cured. This was some years ago, and there has been no recurrence of his trouble. Each specialist found the seat of the trouble in his own department. It was the sensible family doctor, who knew something of all departments of medicine, who located the trouble and sent him to the right man. The specialists had found what they were hunting for. In our church work we have a class of men who have become

specialists in their lines. They are much like the specialists in science. They become contracted, unable to weigh evidence in other departments and unconsciously become biased in their judgment. Our church teachers are in no small danger of this very narrowing of judgment. It is not improbable that any scheme of church union would meet with decided opposition on the part of many of our church teachers.

Closely connected with those who labor in our educational institutions are the editors of our church papers and magazines. These men of rare Christian spirit are hard workers, and have for years stood on the advanced line. They have fought the battles of the church most valiantly. We are not surprised to find that such struggles as these men have been forced to enter, under great odds and discouragement and at times almost single-handed, have developed a class of men who are exceedingly loyal to principle, and tenacious in their fidelity to denominational positions. It has been the business of life for these men to defend the church from every kind of attack, from the world, the flesh, the devil, from secularity, science, and other churches. They have been leaders in all denominational movements. It is not only natural, but practically impossible that it should be otherwise, that these men should become partisan in spirit. It has been the business of life with them. As their writings enter the families of the church it is inevitable that these men should exert a great influence over pastors and families, largely determining the views of the multitude upon all questions touching the organic unity of the church. From the nature of their work they would be led to assume the position of opposition.

The third class which from the nature of their work would be led to assume a position antagonistic to the organic union of the church is what we may call the administrative class. These are at the head of our denominational agencies, such as the Secretaries of the Missionary and Benevolent organizations. These men have been constantly dealing with questions pertaining to the

extension of the church. They have worked hard to secure men and funds to carry forward the work to which they have been called. Naturally, their work has developed to an unusual degree the spirit of loyalty to their denomination. Their work has required them to concentrate their energies upon carrying forward the work of their church. It has been their business to study the means by which their denomination might become more powerful and prosperous. In a very real sense their honor as Christian men has been joined with the success of their denomination. They have given up personal ambitions and personal desires, sacrificing all for this work. They would be more than human if their interest in their church should not be rather abnormally developed. It has been their place to study ways and means by which to arouse the church and to lead her in more advanced methods of progress. To turn suddenly to these men and say, let us surrender all this denominational work, let us cease to be a distinct church, and merge our interests with some other body, losing many of our distinctive denominational characteristics, giving up our church name, around which cluster such precious memories, leaving all the past, as a page of neglected history, casting aside every plan for denominational enlargement, and give up projects dearer than life itself would be like asking for a more trying type of martyrdom than ever came to the lot of the ancient saints who sealed their faith with their blood under the Roman persecutors. It is not strange that men who have been thus engaged should utter a protest against any scheme of organic union. It would be a miracle indeed if there did not appear to them insuperable obstacles in the way of such a combination. They see the work to which they have given their lives merged in a combination in which mingle elements heretofore hostile and discordant. They are compelled to sacrifice principles for which they long have contended. Is it strange that such men, strong and true, should raise a protest, or even enter the field of open opposition?

While there may be a want of sympathy with the movement on the part of many who have been leaders, while in places, and among some there may be opposition, possibly bitter opposition to a surrender of what has been held dear in doctrine or polity, still the situation is such, the resulting evil of our present course is so great that the church is bound to give heed to the cry for union which is coming from so many quarters. In this the church has a duty which she cannot ignore without serious consequences. Whatever would increase the efficiency of the whole church without compromising her Lord it is her clear duty to adopt. If we approach the situation with a purpose to ascertain the facts this is what we find. Our Missionary Secretaries, who are in close connection with the work in non-Christian lands, startle us as they press upon us the great obligation of this generation. It would almost seem that the entire world of heathenism has, as though moved by some great conspiracy, opened its doors and begun to call loudly for preachers of Christianity. Japan is ripe, almost over-ripe. Korea presents marvelous opportunities, with indications that unless they are speedily improved, she will close the door against us. The staid old nation, China, after her long slumber, has awakened, and presenting the greatest opportunity for extensive evangelization which the world has ever known, calls for help. Already we see signs of reaction, and ere long this wonderful door may swing shut. In India, in Persia, in Turkey, multitudes stand beckoning, while the great illimitable continent of Africa alone presents opportunities large enough to engulf the entire resources of all Christendom. We listen to these cries for help, and with the consciousness of our limitations we exclaim, Who is sufficient for these things? Is there no means by which this great world call may be met? Can we not increase our gifts and send forth more workers? With a consciousness of the crushing burden we pause to consider what to do. We find in the commercial world to-day two methods by which a greater output may be

secured. One way is to increase the capital, increase the workmen and thus increase the output. Another and far more common method is to cut down the cost of administration and the expense of manufacturing by increasing the efficiency of the plant. If with the same capital, and the same outlay, twenty-five or thirty per cent more goods may be produced, and placed upon the market, great corporations consider that they are wise to take this course, rather than secure the increased output by increasing the expenditure. If that which has been costing \$1,000 can be placed upon the market at a cost of \$500, it is folly to go on using the old methods and machinery. A few years ago in one of the central Western States there was a large, well-equipped plant for the manufacture of steel. The business manager, a quiet, shrewd, intelligent man, at one of the meetings of the directors where a good dividend had been declared, and every report seemed to show a most prosperous condition, startled the board by the proposal that the entire plant should be remodeled to such an extent that it was practically discarding all their machinery, and building a new plant. The directors demurred, and expressed their satisfaction with the existing condition. Why should they expend such a vast sum, when they were able to do business on such a profitable scale? The manager explained that within the two preceding years such improvements had been made in methods and machinery that, as soon as other plants should install the improved machinery, this plant would be put out of business. To hold their place in the market they must rebuild, and by doing so at once they not only would be able to hold their place, but their profits would be so increased as to more than repay for all outlay. The directors were not able to see the wisdom of the course. The manager at once proffered his resignation. Unwilling to lose so good a man, they reconsidered and told him to go ahead, they would pay the bills. Five years proved the correctness of the manager's position. The new machinery had been installed, and the profits had

not only paid for it in full, but the annual average dividend had been larger than during any five years in the history of the company. The expense had been greatly reduced, the output doubled, and the business was far ahead of what it had ever promised to be. The church of our Lord Jesus Christ seems to be nearing a condition something like that of this steel plant. The demand for the output is so great that the Christian church is embarrassed beyond measure. Our Boards are demanding more money, saying they must have it. They are calling for more men. The duty is placed upon our hearts, we are made to feel ourselves under the obligation in some way to meet these calls. In what way shall we do this? Shall it be by increasing our gifts and continuing our present wasteful policy of squandering the Lord's money? Or shall we seek to increase our efficiency by the way that we use the money we now give, and the men already in the field? Shall we seek to reform our wasteful methods? Good business judgment would seem to suggest such a course. Suppose there were brought about organic unity among our churches. Suppose that it were made possible to close up every building in our country which the actual religious needs of the community do not require, suppose that every man thus liberated, who is efficient, went into a field, at the present unoccupied, what would be the result? In all probability the money liberated in the diminished expense at home would enable us to increase our present missionary income tenfold. This would be done without the Christian people giving a single dollar more than they are now giving. The work at home not only would not in a single respect be weakened, but would be actually strengthened. Such a movement would leave us as many pastors and preachers at home as we need, and send forth a great host, more than ten times as many as are there now, into the foreign fields. Such a movement would enable the church, without raising another dollar, to build, equip and man hundreds of hospitals where they are so much needed. It

would enable the church to establish schools by the hundred in the dark and distant regions. It would multiply the efficiency of the church tenfold, making it possible for the last man in the world to hear the Gospel within the next ten years, without requiring a dollar more in money, or a single additional man. All this would be accomplished by simply increasing our efficiency at home and abroad.

The church of our day is meeting with another embarrassment. For some time there has come up the complaint that there is a dearth of candidates for the ministry. We are told that not enough young men are offering themselves to take the place of those who are falling out because of age and other infirmities. Our educators have been telling us of this shortage for a decade or more. Should it continue the day is not distant when the church must suffer from this deficiency. Among the causes we are confident the following should be given a place.

First, the old controversies between denominations, as denominationalism is less emphasized, are gradually dying out. This means that the kind of zeal which is the product of such controversy is disappearing. The young men who formerly entered the ministry under the impulse which came from heated contention are no longer moved by such things, for they have ceased to exist. During the day of bitter controversy there was no dearth of candidates for the ministry. As the controversial spirit disappears, this source of ministerial zeal will cease to exist.

In most denominations it has been maintained that the young man received "a call" to the ministry. It has been believed that God by His Spirit called those whom He desired to enter this office, and made the call known to them in some manner. If this belief be correct, and we are disposed to accept it, are we to suppose that God will "call" into this sacred office five or six or ten times as many as are really needed, simply to gratify the de-

nominal ambitions of the church leaders? Is the gradual diminution of the candidates for the Gospel ministry to be interpreted as having any bearing upon the Divine approval or disapproval of denominationalism? It is inevitable that we should ask, What does it mean? It may be possible that had we not to such an extent increased our denominational organizations so that if we fill all our pulpits we must have many times as many men as would otherwise be required, or could there be a wise combination of unnecessary church organizations we still would have all the men we need. We could demand a higher grade of men, and require them to be better prepared than they are at present. But we take the most extravagant and wasteful way, and with a multitude of men we seek to carry forward the work of the church. Should we be required to justify our course we would, of necessity, be forced to follow something of this line of defense. We keep our money away from the Heathen world, and hold our men at home, that in every little village some of us may hear the Gospel from the lips of a Methodist preacher, another from a Baptist, another from a Presbyterian and another from an Episcopalian. Because we desire this more than we do the extension of the kingdom of God we deliberately squander immense sums of money upon ourselves and let the non-Christian world live on unevangelized, and spend eternity where those we are told must do not serve Christ. It is true that it is the same Gospel which each of these preachers give, but we desire to have it smack of that particular flavor which these particular men can give to it. It is true that the Methodist brother would be asked to believe in the same Christ in a Presbyterian Church, and the Presbyterian would be taught the same kind of a holy life should he attend the Episcopalian Church, but then, while we cannot tell the difference in the Gospel coming from these different men, we have a more comfortable feeling, there is a genuine satisfaction in receiving it from a man who bears the particular stamp which by accident we happen

to have adopted. That we may be permitted to have this particular kind of pleasure and satisfaction we form our little groups, and as Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, we get a preacher, such as we can find, having our stripe of religion, and say to the millions in pagan darkness, Wait, for we feel so much more comfortable to do as we are doing. We say this, while it is true that with nine churches out of ten every dollar which we put into the home work is holding back the dollar which might go to the heathen world. By this method not only do we keep good money from its legitimate work in foreign lands, but we use it at home in such a way as greatly to retard the progress of the kingdom of God here. The money which is used, unnecessarily in some little American village, if it had been sent abroad would have resulted in the conversion of hundreds of men and women. But while we are sorry that this is so, and while we are ready to admit that the situation is unfortunate, and we devoutly pray that the Great Head of the church may heal our divisions and make us one, we go right ahead without doing one real vital thing to heal the differences, or to put a stop to the evil. Some one must be in some measure responsible for this. Some one has a duty. No board of directors in a great commercial enterprise would for a moment tolerate such a management of a business for gain as characterizes the Protestant Church to-day. If a fire should break out and burn to the ground all the church buildings in all our small towns, and then the different denominations should come together and put up a single building, it would be an unqualified blessing to the entire community. Could such conflagrations become general, in country villages and larger cities, and similar unions follow, it would be the commencement of the greatest revival in pure and undefiled religion which this world has known in millenniums. What an admission to make concerning the methods of the church of Christ! What a scathing condemnation of the leadership of the church which continues unimproved such a

condition. In any other management than that of the church leaders who were unable to improve such a situation would be pronounced incompetent, and their resignations would be demanded. But because we are in Christian work, and are able to appeal to prejudice, and the spirit of emulation, we strive to work up what is known as a spirit of loyalty to one's own church, while we cause the great Christian brotherhood of men to appear before the world as waging a bitter fight. The battles were once fought with carnal weapons, and men were haled to dungeons and the stake because they could not agree with those in authority. We have passed this stage, and have arrived at the place where we can put a keener edge upon our weapons, and by competition, silent, continuous, relentless, cruel, we push our competitors to the wall, and where it becomes possible, crush the life out of them. And this we are pleased to call the spirit of Christianity.

It is now frequently said that the spirit of contention, so prevalent but recently, has very largely died out. We are told that controversy has ceased. Here and there some enthusiast is preaching a gospel of church unity. It is, however, true that the great mass of the church, both of the membership and the ministry, remains in a state of practical indifference. We are drifting, and each denomination is striving to fasten and make more secure her own stakes. We seem to have inherited a situation, which we are doing our best to continue, and are planning to hand over to our children, where their chance of carrying confusion to all other denominations will be far better than we have had. For us to succeed is to deepen the grip of denominationalism. As a Presbyterian I strive to make Presbyterianism stronger, and the Methodist brother works day and night to strengthen his denomination. If we all succeed, while externally we may conduct a less boisterous warfare than was formerly done, it will be a more determined one. Now it is time that something were done to put a stop to this struggling, divisive, unchristian spirit. Some one has a

duty to perform. If we study the situation fairly it would seem that to-day there rests upon the church the duty of organic unity. The Christian church is made up of warring factions. It becomes the duty of the factions to come together. It is the duty of the church at large. It is the duty of the denominations. It is the duty of the individual church in the denomination. It is the duty of the individual member in the individual church of the denomination. The duty rests upon the leaders of the church, the teachers and professors in our educational institutions, the Secretaries of our various Boards, the company of religious editors, the leaders in Presbyteries, Synods, Assemblies, Conferences and the officers and leaders of the individual church. It is our duty, each and all, to put aside personal preferences, and to labor for the unity of the church of Christ. It is our duty to pray that the church may be one. After we have offered such a prayer, who can doubt that it is the duty of each one to do all within his power to bring about an answer to his prayer. When the church becomes aroused, and all realizing this duty enter with an honest purpose upon the attainment of this much to be desired end, not long will be delayed the coming together, in one glorious organization, of the entire visible church on earth according to the will of our Blessed Master. Then will His prayer be answered, and His disciples will be one, even as the Father and the Son are one.

CHAPTER XII

POSSIBILITIES

FOR many years there apparently has existed the settled conviction that the present ecclesiastical situation is practically hopeless. The assumption seems to have been that it was one of the inborn proclivities of human nature, so powerful that Divine grace was helpless to change it, to be forever in a quarrel. The division of the church into denominations, while embarrassing her progress, was still necessary to enable thinking men to be honest. Under such a condition the most for which we could hope would be a kind of truce, a mutual agreement not to turn our guns upon each other. A substitute for unity, Federation, has been suggested. But there must be no exercise of authority, or the federation would fly to pieces and the result be disastrous. These assemblies of the churches in one great gathering would serve as a means of knowing each other better, and of inspiration. Such a thing might in some measure lessen the friction. A very few men, and some of them scholarly and conservative, have had the temerity openly to advocate an organic union of dismembered Protestantism. The leaders of the church still smile with incredulity at the suggestion of such a course. They listen patiently to addresses which sometimes are made advocating such a union. The address being ended a resolution is passed, and then each denomination goes on repairing her defenses and strengthening her fortifications. But it must be admitted that in recent years the number of those who are dissatisfied with the present situation is steadily increasing. More men are becoming convinced that such unnecessary divisions must pain the

Great Head of the church and that something should be done to remedy the evil. The denominational quarrel is being considered, as never before, a denominational sin. Many believe not only that something can be done to right the wrong, but that the church is under a divine obligation to make the attempt. There are men in the church who have visions of great possibilities in this direction. As soon as we, who are Christians, are willing to put aside personal prejudices, and denominational pride, and in the spirit of true Christian humility commence to pray for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of believers, there are not a few who believe that obstacles will disappear and that the divided church will be reunited. Efforts at union are already in progress among three of the great denominations in Canada. The attempt is being made on mission fields with a measure of success. In some fields family groups have come together and formed a single church. This is especially true of the Presbyterian families, in Japan, Korea, and India. If such efforts should continue, why might it not be possible to secure a union in the mission field of all denominations? We are admitting to-day that all evangelical denominations are genuinely Christian. We compliment each other upon the harmonious spirit which exists among us. Then why not come together? If it be true, as we all profess, that at heart we are so solidly one, why should it be a difficult thing for us to complete the union and assume the outward form? If it be not true, as we represent, that we are so harmonious, if our differences have engendered such a spirit of contention that it has rendered union impossible, then we should be honest and admit it. But to admit this, in an honest spirit, would require that we go farther, and seek that such a spirit should disappear, and that the true spirit of Christ should be manifest in all our lives. If we would not do this it would be an open declaration that the different branches of the Christian church are so bitterly hostile to each other that they cannot live together in peace. The denominations would

appear like the tribes of savages who roam the wilds of an unexplored continent, ever on the warpath. What Christians say of the sects of Buddhism and Mohammedanism is just as true of our own body. If the existing sects in these non-Christian bodies are evidences of their human origin, and that God is not with them, may not the existence of similar sects in the body of Christians justify a similar inference concerning the Christian church? We believe that the church of Christ is really a Divine institution. Her origin came from God. Now let us ask, which of the denominations, the splits which have gone off from the church, can claim that it is of divine origin. Where we have so many conflicting claims, something more than the claim is surely required to show that our claim is just. But little examination can be required to find the heat of human nature in every split. Denominationalism is its own condemnation. It must be possible if we go back to the church as it was, to find that kind of an organization which can bear the stamp of God.

As we study the possibility of healing what we must pronounce to be the ungodly divisions now existing in the church, we are forced to ask, How can such a union be brought about? In this we see the possibility. But we say there must be agreement, else how can two walk together. There must be some basis on which we may get together. This basis must have two sides. There must of necessity be some basis of credal agreement. Unless a church believe something concerning God, Christ, a Christian life, it cannot exist. There can be no agreement unless there be something upon which persons agree. If two men find that they both believe in God, they have found a place where they agree. The reunited church must believe something, and what this church believes can be the creed. In the past most of the differences which have resulted in the forming of denominations have been along credal lines. The church has learned her lesson how to split on creeds. Now can she learn how to come together on a creed? This is one

of the questions which confronts the student of church union under existing circumstances.

There are some things now upon which all denominations agree. All agree that to be a Christian it is necessary to believe in God. The Christian, all believe, must believe in the Scriptures, the book given by God through inspiration, in which we find the duties which God requires of us, and the things which we are to believe concerning Him. We must believe some things concerning Christ, including His birth, His life, His teachings, His death and His relation to the penitent sinner. We must believe something concerning a future life and a coming judgment. Without some kind of belief upon all these things it would be impossible to be a Christian. As a matter of fact there is practical agreement among the denominations. In that very ancient Creed known as the Apostles' Creed we have a form of words which sets forth the position of the church. Not only were the things stated in this Creed the faith of the early church, but through the ages they have continued to be the faith of the church. Not only does evangelical Protestantism accept this Creed, but the Roman Catholic and practically the Greek Catholic Churches as well. We may go farther and say that this Creed gives what a man must believe that he may be a Christian. In the early church, especially in the Apostolic Church, very little was required in a credal way of a convert. The essential thing, as in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius, was an intelligent confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Divine Savior. This much was required. Scholars have agreed that from the day of Pentecost there has been a creed and that it was probably based upon the baptismal formula found in the closing verses of the Gospel of Matthew. In those early days the custom of placing in the creed a system of theology, based upon a system of philosophy, fitted to meet the attacks of all types of unbelief had not appeared. In the simple creed there was no reference to false systems of religion. The creed was not made as a weapon against in-

fidelity, or for the outside world, condemning all that was not true, and including all that was true. It was not made to defeat heresy, or to teach the orthodox, but as an expression of true simple faith. The Apostles' Creed we find sufficiently comprehensive to include all that is essential to make a genuine Christian. Some years ago an effort was in progress to organize what has since been known as the "Church of Christ," in Japan. It was to be the Japanese church of the Presbyterian type. In this was to be included bodies of all kinds of Presbyterians, and the Reformed (Dutch) Church. The missionaries as the leaders and teachers were attempting to control and direct the movement. Loyal to their home training and their occidental convictions, they proposed that the creed of the new church should consist of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, together with the Canons of the Synod of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism. This gave a creed sufficiently comprehensive to satisfy the missionaries of all the churches. The Japanese clergymen, who were theologically sound, and readily accepted the doctrinal positions of all these churches, insisted that a briefer statement should be made. Their reason was that it had been found, even among the educated classes, and in the ministry, that the Japanese cared little for the creed which had come from America. The Westminster Standards and the Canons of Dort had failed to hold a place in the church, they were not disbelieved, or rejected, but were neglected, were not even read with care. The Catechisms were not taught. Much discussion had taken place before the meeting of the Synod, and the missionaries had brought no little pressure to bear upon the native clergy to bring them to adopt the proposed symbols. At the meeting of the Synod, against the expressed desire of the missionaries, a resolution was introduced by a Japanese pastor, proposing to make the Apostles' Creed the sole symbol of the new church. The missionaries were startled. Discussion followed in which the Japanese clergy advocated

the adoption of the resolution and the missionaries opposed. Unusual earnestness and not a little warmth was manifested. The time to adjourn for the day arrived much to the relief of all. Both sides looked forward to the next day with solicitude. On the afternoon of the second day discussion was discontinued while the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered. The arguments presented by one side, almost entirely by the missionaries, was the old one that the forms of unbelief which should be met, and were common in Japan, were not clearly touched by the Apostles' Creed, consequently a more extensive creed should be prepared. This was the Occidental view. The Japanese maintained that their creed was not for those outside the church, but for Christians. They were making a Creed for believers alone. As the Synod opened on the following morning a Japanese pastor presented the following creed:

"The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we worship as God, the Only Begotten Son of God, for us men and for our salvation was made man and suffered. He offered us a perfect sacrifice for sin; and all who are one with Him by faith are pardoned and accounted righteous; and faith in Him working by love purifies the heart.

"The Holy Ghost, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, reveals Jesus Christ to the soul; and without His grace man being dead in sin cannot enter the kingdom of God. By Him the prophets and the Apostles and holy men of old were inspired; and He, speaking in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the supreme and infallible Judge in all things pertaining to faith and living.

"From these Holy Scriptures the ancient church of Christ drew its confession; and we, holding the faith once delivered to the saints, join in that confession with praise and thanksgiving." (Here follows the Apostles' Creed.)

We find in this Creed, short, simple, inclusive, nothing which is not believed by all Protestant denomina-

tions, as well as by the Roman Catholic Church. We can see no reason why the Korean Christians, the Chinese Christians, the Christians of India and America could not all subscribe to this Creed. It is true that we believe a great deal more than the Creed contains, but we do believe all that it includes. No man can sincerely subscribe to this Creed who is not a Christian. If he believe these things he is a Christian. The religious thinker and student could formulate for himself a creed which should contain ten thousand articles, but so long as it was in harmony with this brief statement he would remain unhampered by this Creed. Nothing is said concerning Baptism, or its mode of administration, nor concerning the Sacrament of the Supper. Neither does the Apostles' Creed touch these and many other things. Why not leave such questions outside the Creed? But the church, we think unwisely, has said that this shall not be. That we may have fellowship in some denominations the mode of baptism must be settled. Another church makes much of the decrees, while another has much to say concerning free-will. Other questions are settled just as definitely. Each denomination has thrown about itself a wall of credal statements. It is intended that this shall keep all outsiders on the outside and all who are inside on the inside. Yet with all these churches it is readily admitted that the others are just as truly Christian. One is led to ask, How can we reconcile such a course with the commandment of Jesus? "John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name and he followed not us: and we forbade him, because he followed not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." (Mark IX: 38, 39.)

That such a simplified creed, as this adopted by the Japanese church, is a practical working creed, that a denomination holding such a Creed can do effective work for Christ has been demonstrated during a series of years. It is far from easy to hold together the forces

of a Christian organization in a land just emerging from the darkness of heathenism. The difficulties are more numerous and trying than in a country like our own, where there are traditions, formed through centuries to guide in all possible emergencies. Many of the pastors came from families where idolatry was practiced. The great mass of the people, the educated and influential classes, still worship in heathen temples. The ethical system of the country is still held by the debasing conditions of heathenism. The old views and superstitions, the inheritance of ages, die hard. Two and three generations of Christian training scarcely suffice to obliterate wholly the old errors. Still further to complicate the situation, the rationalistic and materialistic philosophies of the Occident have found their way to the far East and their most persuasive and powerful books are read by the multitudes. If anywhere the Christian church needed to be carefully guarded one would suppose that it would be in a land like Japan. Yet as an actual fact, "The Church of Christ of Japan," with its simple Creed, is as wide awake and prosperous as the church in America. The Japanese Christians experience no embarrassment because their Creed does not include more. They have less theological difficulty than we have at home. They have demonstrated in that country the feasibility of a brief, comprehensive credal statement as the basis of a strong ecclesiastical organization. Without any impropriety we might suppose that any Christian clergyman, or any educated thoughtful believer who could accept this Creed, would find himself perfectly at home in this organization. Why not? If he were not a Christian he could not accept this Creed. If he be a genuine Christian why should trouble arise? It leaves him perfectly free to preach the whole Gospel. This Creed is sufficient guide to hold one down to the orthodox evangelical positions of the church.

To study another example of a working successful church without an elaborate credal statement, we may turn to the first three centuries of the Christian church.

There was no lengthy statement of theological belief. Each of the leading churches appears to have formed its own Creed, based upon the general baptismal formula. We find a variety of creeds in the first centuries. Fragmentary accounts of these have come down to us through the Church Fathers. As far back as Irenaeus we find reference to such creeds. Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Novatian, Gregory and others refer to them. There appears to have been essential agreement among them all. Not until the Council of Nicea, 325, was there an effort to formulate an extensive creed which should be binding upon the entire church. We see, therefore, that for centuries a simple creed sufficed for all purposes. During these centuries the church passed through some of her most trying experiences. Not only were there violent persecutions, with martyrdom for many, but the church was forced to contend with the far more powerful and dangerous influences of Greek learning and philosophy. It was necessary for her to meet and overthrow Roman heathenism, which was entrenched in the government. She was compelled to meet and drive out the superstitions of centuries which were in every walk of life. The most powerful rulers of the most mighty nation employed all their power and cunning to overthrow and obliterate the Christian church. It would seem that under such conditions if the church were to be held together it would be necessary that there should be a creed sufficiently broad to exclude every form of error and to include every important truth. But with a brief, concise statement, but little longer than the Apostles' Creed, the church of Christ was able to fight the battles of the first four hundred years of her existence, and made the greatest conquests in her history.

It may, however, be said that a creed is not the only essential in the development of the church. Much depends upon the organization, the ecclesiastical machinery. While this is admitted it may be said that the polity is considered far less a matter of conscience than

the theology of church. One is surprised that for the first sixteen centuries of the history of the church's existence there appeared no real divergence in polity. The Eastern and the Western church, after they separated because of theological differences retained practically the ancient form of government and organization. This fact is a demonstration positive that a single organization can be effectively applied to all the church. We find divergences of views in all denominations. There are high churchmen and low churchmen in every organization. In every denomination we find some ready to enter the arena to maintain that the polity of their particular church bears the stamp of Apostolic authority. It is the ecclesiastical government contained in the Scriptures. But it must be admitted that the teachings of the Apostles are scarcely clear along this line. It ought to be easier to handle this side of the question when the churches combine. This should become easier when we face the fact that for several centuries reasonably good work has been done under a large variety of ecclesiastical organization. No one would assume to say that the Christian Church could not govern herself successfully and very satisfactorily under an Episcopal type of government. While some may think it rather difficult to trace this form of government back to the churches which St. Paul organized, while many may believe that there is evidence that the first churches were probably under another type of polity, yet it is true that in the age immediately following the Apostles the Episcopal forms are unmistakably found. From the close of the first century to the present time this type of church government has manifested its ability to meet every possible emergency which has arisen. It is to-day by far the prevailing type of ecclesiastical government. The whole world must admit that a Christian church can live and prosper under this form. It has shown itself to be the most stable form, and has fewer weaknesses than any other.

Another important type of church government is the

Presbyterian. Not a few who hold this form believe that it comes the nearest to the biblical form of any. They point to the synagogue and its eldership and suggest that the first churches were but simply Christian synagogues. This form of government, if it were the original, commenced to undergo a process of modification before the close of the first century. In the sixteenth century it reappeared at Geneva, Switzerland, and its progress and success since that time entitles it to the claim of being a successful and stable type.

Some have maintained the Congregational type as tenaciously as any other, as being the only simple pure biblical government for the church. In actual experience its friends have found that it requires to be strengthened and supplemented by Conferences, Councils, and Associations. It has been necessary that there should be some real tangible bond of union between the separate organizations.

These three general types of government have existed for several centuries. Whatever may be the conviction of individuals concerning which one is to be preferred, every man must admit that Christians can live and work under either one of them. For three or four hundred years men have so lived and worked under the Presbyterian and Congregational form of government. For nearly nineteen hundred years they have lived and worked under the Episcopal form. Not one of them can successfully claim a "Thus saith the Lord" for its authority. There can be no real claim that the Scriptures so preclude either form as to render it wrong. Some speak of the gathering at Jerusalem in the year 51 A. D. as a Council, or Conference; others refer to the same gathering as a Synod. The denominational connection usually determines the term employed. This illustrates about the manner in which a man seeks to establish the polity of his church from the Scriptures. The Episcopalian calls certain New Testament officers bishops, while the Presbyterian consistently speaks of them as elders. Which is right? What does it matter,

really, provided the spirit of the Scriptures be not broken, and the work of the kingdom be carried on successfully? What is needed is a deep piety and a thorough consecration to the service of God, and then faithful work under the government which the church adopts.

The point pressed in this chapter is that it is possible for the various denominations, if they will, to agree upon a good workable creed, which will bind all Christians in a common brotherhood, so that they be unhampered either in their spiritual development and religious activities, and that it is within a reasonable possibility for all Christians to come together under a single form of church government. If this be possible, and it certainly is, if men will be fair, then we may raise the question, Why is it not done? There is every reason if it be possible that it should be done, and done at the earliest possible date. The great economy in the administration of the church under such an arrangement would of itself justify extreme measures in the effort to bring to pass such a union. The reproach of a divided church demands immediate action to this end. The situation of our modern church is well illustrated by the condition of the church in Corinth in the year 59 A. D. How it came about we are not sure, but at that time we find the church of Corinth divided into four distinct warring parties or sects. They had not at the time divided the church and organized denominational bodies, but appeared ready to do so. There was a Paul party, and Apollos party, a Cephus party, and another party which called itself the Christ party. It is possible that those who bore the name of Paul were just as rigid in their convictions that they were right and all the others wrong as are the modern Presbyterians, or Episcopals. Believing themselves to be standing upon a great, fundamental principle, they were as determined to maintain their positions as are the Methodists or Lutherans of our day. Suppose that the Paul party, in order that they might give their testi-

mony without interference to a particular phase of Gospel truth, had gone out of the church and organized another church, forming a new denomination. Next the Apollos party followed and there were three denominations. Later the Cephus and the Christ parties separated, and there were four distinct denominations in Corinth. They erected buildings, and entered into the struggle to secure as many of the converts from heathenism into their respective organizations as was possible. All this was done with much prayer and self-sacrifice. There was the kind of stimulation which came from such competition. Each party or sect was loyal to the doctrine which it claimed to receive from the one whose name was nailed to the mast-head of the denomination. Had this thing been carried to the extent which we have supposed, and new denominations been formed, as was done at and after the sixteenth century, how Christendom would have been shocked. When such a catastrophe threatened St. Paul, who was in Asia, detected the danger and hastily wrote his first letter to that Church. His plea is one of the most earnest and pathetic recorded in the Scriptures. The Apostle pleaded in the name of the crucified Christ that there might be no divisions. In such a course as seemed before the church this old Apostle seemed to see the greatest catastrophe. He condemned the spirit and the kind of adherence to doctrine which these persons assumed. He declared that divisions of such a nature were unsound in doctrine and that those who caused them were not serving the Lord, but following their own selfish ends. Yet in our day we see Christians in the United States divided into one hundred and fifty sects, and more, and without feeling under the necessity of giving a single word of apology or explanation. Because Christians have ceased to burn each other, or to cast those who held a somewhat modified creed into prison, because we no longer expel men from the country because of their views, nor use the whipping post, we make a great boast of the Christ spirit which we manifest, and talk piously of the won-

derful spirit of unity which binds the denominations together in the bond of Christian love. Having done this, we maintain with bitter tenacity all the old divisions, and are forever repairing the fences which shut in our beloved denomination. While we have left behind some of the bitterness of the past, we cling tenaciously to the fruits of the controversies. Have we not progressed sufficiently, has not the Christian of the twentieth century arrived at the measure of Christian culture where he may be willing to stop fighting other Christians, and may we not come together and live peaceably in the same house, as members of the same family? Should not this be a reasonable possibility for the Christian of to-day?

CHAPTER XIII

THE NEXT GREAT AWAKENING

CUSTOM so familiarizes men with certain experiences that many things which under normal conditions would give a moral shock lead to no serious consideration. There was a time in Europe when men were recognized as consistent Christians, even devout religious leaders, who maintained their establishments by brigandage and robbery. It was no unusual thing that expeditions led by these men resulted in the slaughter of many persons and the destruction of much property. For the proprietor of a landed estate in Germany, or France, to-day to keep about him a company of armed men, and upon every opportunity to wage war upon other landlords and estates, slaying the owners, taking prisoners the households, and carrying off the harvest and private property as lawful plunder, would arouse the indignation of the civilized world. It would bring down upon them the forces of government and the offending persons would be dealt with as criminals. But the nature of the deed has not changed. In those days men were accustomed to such things and were not at all disturbed by this kind of savagery. Some thirty years ago there was a pastor in Nova Scotia, who had held that position for over forty years. It was the custom of his predecessor to announce from the pulpit, week by week, on what afternoons he would call, and at what particular homes. On one afternoon as he was returning from such a series of calls upon a lonely country road he met a lad of twelve or fifteen years, who was from one of his families. Greeting him cordially, he added, "Alex, does your father know that I am to visit

in your home to-morrow?" Taking from the pocket of his coat a bottle of brandy, he held it up and said, "How does that look?" A pastor who seventy-five years ago, visiting in the homes of a thrifty New England community, went to his family physician, complaining that after making several visits upon his parishioners he experienced a peculiar lightness in his head, and at times a little dizziness, asked how he might ward it off. The kind doctor replied, "Go home at once and drink a cup of very strong tea, and lie down." The custom in those days was always to offer the pastor when he called liquid refreshment, and this good man suffered from too many calls. No one ever raised a question concerning the propriety of offering the visiting clergyman brandy. Should it be discovered to-day that in some parish such a custom continued the moral sentiment of the nation would be shocked. It is no more out of place to-day, not one whit more sinful now than it was then. Those ministers were just as godly men as can be found in our parishes to-day. The difference is that social customs have changed and this practice has disappeared. Is it not possible that in a similar manner the Christian conscience has become so accustomed to the spectacle of three, four and five little struggling churches in a community that it has ceased to speak with fidelity? When divisions first came there was unconcealed regret and pain. At every break there have been misgivings and sorrow. With this has usually been such a measure of bitter hatred engendered that a generation or more has been required to permit sufficient cooling off so that relations outwardly might assume something of the nature of peace. By the second or third generation persons have become so accustomed to the situation that further comment ceases. In our age of the church, and for four hundred years we have maintained, at great expense and effort, a condition in the church of Christ, which in all previous ages was considered as highly disloyal to God, and exceedingly wicked. At this time we have gone so far in the oppo-

site direction that we point to these contentions as evidence of the high religious character of our times. Division and disruption we use as evidence of a high degree of spiritual development, a sure proof that the conscience is keenly alive. It is centuries since the age of feudalism in civil and social life, but in the church we appear just now to be at this stage. In the past the petty baron waged war upon all his neighbors, and if he were able, despoiled them. The feudal church still creeds her castles, and sends forth her warlike parties to despoil her neighbor churches. We visit our leading cities. On one corner is a large and beautiful church. A block away is another, and on the opposite corner still another, and within two or three blocks is a fourth, each seeking to gather the people of the community within its own organization. Should the time come when in answer to our Lord's prayer these organizations should become one, three of the buildings would be useless, and like the ruined castles along some of the rivers in Europe, would be silent witnesses of the turbulent times in the past. To-day the community beholds these same buildings as evidence of the religious spirit of our age. They are supposed to testify to the religious stability of the community.

If a man in one of our congregations to-day should become somewhat displeased with the pastor, and to secure his removal should commence quietly to gather about him a party, which after it became strong should begin to make demands, and finally when unable to secure what he sought should break away, organize another church, erect another building, larger and finer than the first, and go on in the name of the Lord to evangelize the world, we would be shocked. That has happened over and over. A little village of about fifteen hundred population, with a large and prosperous Roman Catholic Church and four Protestant churches, within the last few years was the scene of just such an event. It was deplored, and the movement was a cause of sorrow. The new organization had no difficulty in

finding shelter in another denomination, which previously had no organization in the community. The community was overburdened before, and with this new movement Protestantism in that village was crippled. The man who leads such a movement weakens the cause of religion in the community. It is wrong, a sin. Every time such a movement takes place there must be joy in the kingdom of darkness. Such divisions arouse a bitterness of heart which is unfavorable to true religious development. It is difficult for the man whose heart burns with resentment to worship. Such divisions instead of drawing men, Christian brothers, into a closer, more fraternal relation, arouse a spirit of hostility and contention. They destroy the intimacy which should exist between Christian workers. It must involve guilt. The men who are engaged in such controversies are in a measure unfitted for prayer and religious meditation. Men who practice such things as are employed in this struggle are crowded away from true piety, and are led into the spirit of sectarianism.

For a long time there has been a growing conviction of a process of deterioration in the standards of Christian living. In our day there is much discussion concerning the religious life. There are among us very few cases of pre-eminent piety. Unless in seasons when some religious controversy was on, or at a time when a nervous, energetic endeavor was in progress to create what is known as a "Revival," it has been difficult to secure the attendance of Christians at the church. Even among the clergy there has appeared a change. The preachers are growing speculative and discourse upon philosophy, sociology, political corruption and similar themes. In evangelism the most conspicuous for their success depend upon violent attacks upon the ministry, the members of the church and the Christian community. If you remove the saloon, the card table, the dancing party and the theater, the leading evangelists of the country to-day would be so tame that none would care to hear them. There is something wrong. The

preaching of God's Word does not appear to have the power which it did a generation ago. The lack of power in the Word is made up by the increased activity of the preacher. He employs the most striking, poignant, cutting language, and accompanies it with extreme spectacular pulpit mannerism, assailing everybody, accusing the entire Christian community of being guilty of the vilest and most repulsive sins. For a few weeks he secures a hearing, then goes elsewhere. One evangelist made the statement in a private conversation not long since, that "This extreme method is the only one which can succeed to-day, and this cannot be depended upon much longer." If the ordinary ministrations of the house of God have lost their power, if these exceptional evangelists, employing the most startling sensational methods, feel their influence already at its zenith, and sure to wane, what are we going to do? It looks as though the prince of the power of darkness were actually getting the mastery over the church. Frightened, the church has sprung to her feet and organization after organization of men, women, boys and girls are launched in the hope that these will stop the downward trend. The leaders of the spiritual work of the country hail each of these movements as something which promises temporary relief. The cry is "organize." This year we organize and work one thing, next year it will be another. Our hearts grow heavy. Somehow our prayers are not reaching God. We do not secure the results which our souls crave. The heart grows desperate. Something must be done, for the church seems to be losing her influence, her spiritual power seems waning. This is apparent in the character of the church members. It is not true in our day that the church member is conspicuous for his liberality. I am speaking of the Protestant Church. We are not holding the young. Those of maturer years are drifting away from us. Our church services are neither holding the people nor developing the character which we would expect would be the result, were God with His people. If there were

something in the church radically wrong, which was keeping God at a distance, as Joshua found after the battle of Jericho, we could easily account for it. Then we would at once say God has withdrawn His power, and before we can secure His help, we must remove the evil. Are we going too far when we suggest that possibly this multitudinous division of the church into contending sects may be the wrong that weakens Christendom? Are we making too strong an assertion when we say that our contentions which have produced and continues such a multitude of denominations is causing God to stand aloof? One thing is sure, such a contentious spirit cannot be right. If it were wrong to bring about these conditions it must be wrong to maintain them. If it be wrong to continue such a condition then it is a sin. Denominationalism is the direct product of sin, and must be displeasing to God. This condition was the product of quarrels, and it continues because men will not agree. This kind of disagreement is discord, and has in it nothing of the love of Christ. The spirit which produced denominationalism came from the realm of darkness. The spirit which continues this condition cannot be from God. It must be from the place whence the spirit came which brought it about. Such quarrels and such contentions have always interfered with the Spirit of God in His work. These conditions have always held the church away from God. A condition of true Christian strength is the forsaking of all evil, and the humble, submissive seeking of God. Because of the sins of our fathers denominations were born. Because of our sinfulness we refuse to come together and denominations continue. Because of our sinfulness, of which we do not repent, and which we refuse to forsake, God leaves us without the witness of His presence. Such contentions are the outbursts of passion. They are wrong. In the past they have ever interfered with that spirit which seeks such humble, loving service as God has a right to expect. Such a contentious spirit has ever failed to produce devout, earnest consecration which manifests

itself in pious godly character. If it be true that godliness in the church is a mighty power, if it be true that God has respect to the prayers of the devout and humble worshipper and that He turns away from the contentious and proud, then this contentious spirit, which is the basis of denominationalism, must tend to separate a man from his God. Such a spirit must, to just the extent that it exists, unfit a man for the truest and noblest Christian service.

That there may be a genuine revival of true and undefiled religion in the life of the individual, in a congregation, in a community there comes first a consciousness of its needs, a sense of sin. This is followed by sincere sorrow. Sorrow leads to repentance and genuine repentance leads to the forsaking of sin. If there are persons who have injured others, if there are those who have defrauded, and have money in their possession obtained by dishonest means, if the repentance be genuine, there is acknowledgment, a desire for forgiveness, and restoration of that which had been unlawfully obtained. One of the characteristics of not a few awakenings has been that persons who have defrauded others, or have defrauded companies or corporations, have made acknowledgment and restoration. If a man has stolen a watch from some one at a great "revival," as he passed in through the crowd, and before he goes out, is really converted, and becomes a Christian, it is certain that his first act will be to return that watch. If he should come forward in the presence of the assembled people, and confess that he is a thief, that he sincerely repents, and kneels down before them all, and with groaning and tears prays for forgiveness, but keeps the watch, we have proof positive that his conversion is not genuine. The prayer of such a man can have but little influence. A righteous God could not respect his cries, for they would not express the real state of heart. It is a rule without exception that the man who would serve God must repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance, surrender the fruit of his sin. In the de-

nominal situation why should we not expect a similar spirit to show itself? We are sorry, truly sorry, that our fathers quarreled and became so unchristian as to separate in anger. We mourn over the dismembered condition of Protestantism. We pray God in His Infinite goodness in the exercise of His Almighty power to heal the breaches of Zion and to help us to see eye to eye. We fervently pray that the Great Head of the church would drive away variance, fill our hearts with His own love and make us one. What are we doing to bring this condition about? Each denomination hugs its own peculiar idiosyncrasies and talks of the fraternal spirit, but no step is taken towards a reuniting. No one moves to bring quiet to the disturbed family. Can peace and harmony come to the church through prayer alone? Can we expect God to pour out His Spirit in mighty power upon a divided, wrangling church? When we speak of a single congregation we all agree that the first condition of the Divine blessing is to stop quarreling and becoming reconciled, to walk together in peace. Refreshings from above will not come upon a congregation which is factious and contentious. We seem to assume that if there be a sufficient number of congregations involved in the quarrel, and if the fight be big enough, so that instead of having two factions in one congregation we have two great splendid denominations, then the battle becomes the Lord's, and we may look forward for the Divine blessing. The nature of the situation is not changed whether few or many be involved, only the heinousness of the offence is aggravated. Contention whether it be among individuals, as among the Apostles, when debating among themselves who should be greatest, or in the factions of a congregation, or the contentions of a number of larger factions, known as denominations, must ever be a source of pain to Christ, the Head of the church. Such a state must affect most unfavorably the relation of the members of the church, the church itself, and the denomination to God. In the midst of such a warfare how can the kingdom of God

prosper?

From the review of the divided condition of the church two things, we believe, become apparent. The first is that it is highly improbable that God should bestow spiritual power upon a body of persons in such a state. Such a church is in no condition to receive the Holy Spirit, any more than a contentious man. Our present condition precludes any great spiritual awakening, such as would move all Christendom. There has been no such awakening for centuries. Some rumors of something of this kind are heard, but after an investigation we find that instead of the turning of multitudes to God, at the most there are only a few paltry thousands. What we long for is an awakening which shall reach the great multitudes and change nations. This used to take place, but not since the denominational spirit has reigned. The church has placed her desire for such an awakening on record in all sorts of resolutions, but somehow the windows of heaven have not been opened, the pentecostal blessing has not appeared. Is this because God has provided for no such thing? Is it because the power of the Holy Spirit was exhausted long ago? Is there no more conviction for sin? The hosts of Jehovah have put themselves in array and marched forth for the battle. On the way contention commenced within the ranks. The leaders disagreed and quarreled, the army broke up into separate denominations, each with its own standard, under its own leader, and with its own battle cry. The church is no longer one, she has been shattered to fragments. The next great awakening will not take place under such conditions. As we bring our gifts to the altar we have to remember that with us all, our brother hath somewhat against us. Something should be done.

In the second place, if the church, including any considerable number of the various denominations, should, according to the Scriptural idea of penitence, become truly repentant and bring forth fruit meet for repentance by coming together and putting aside contention,

what in all probability would take place? There could certainly be no depression of spiritual life resulting from such a movement. If it be true that one of the first things sought when an endeavor is being made to quicken the spiritual life of the individual congregation is to secure the tranquillity and peace of the congregation, and this is considered not only essential to the success of the movement, but a part of it, should we not reason that a similar course should be followed in any endeavor to awaken and quicken the larger church? If the pastor of a church and some of his people have had such trouble that they can no longer work together, if there are officers in the church who have quarreled, and refuse to work together, if there are families in this church so out of sympathy with each other that they will not sit upon the same side of the house, we could scarcely expect any very marked work of grace among that people until some decided changes had taken place. It is universally recognized that such a condition under all ordinary circumstances precludes the possibility of any real work among them by the Holy Spirit. But suppose the church become so disturbed that she splits. The pastor takes such of the officers and members as are in sympathy with him, and they use the auditorium of the building. Some of the officers with their sympathizers move into the large Sunday School room. Another faction of this church, with its leaders, assembles in the church parlors. Each faction completes its organization and commences its religious work. All these factions go out and seek to secure such members as have not taken sides. Now under such a condition would you expect any great awakening in that congregation? But to remove the difficulties suppose each faction save the pastor and his went outside the building and put up new church buildings, and as separate and independent organizations entered upon the work of saving men, would this remove the spirit of contention, or really change the spirit of division existing? We do not believe that God works among a people in this mental and spiritual

state. Before He will work in and through them they must put aside the contentious spirit, and become one in Him. Let these people, first, stop their contentions. Let them come together, and each become reconciled with his brother. Then, all in one place, let them bow down with a single purpose and commit themselves to God and wait upon Him and see if He will not open the windows of heaven and pour upon them such a pentecostal blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. In our denominationalism, broken up into our discordant organizations we are like that congregation. The progress of the kingdom is hindered. We are praying for seasons of refreshing. Suppose we would come together, put aside our disputes, cease our quarrels, break down the dividing walls, and become one in Christ Jesus, one visible body, one organic whole, one in heart and one in spirit, true yokefellows in Christ, what think you would result?

The trend of such a movement, independent of any Divine influence, would be to bring about a real spiritual awakening. There would be a combination of reflex influences which would be irresistible. The putting aside of strong personal prejudices on the part of some would have a more subduing, mellowing influence in their lives than anything they have ever known. Suppose with any one of us we have arrived at the point where for the sake of the kingdom of God we are ready to surrender our personal likes and ambitions for the sake of the church and the saving of souls, suppose we should say for the glory of God, we will yield much that we have held dear, giving up historical names, and associations in which we have gloried that the church may be made more glorious, what effect do you suppose it would have upon our faith, our Christian character? Would it not bring us into a closer relation with God? This very act on our part would deepen religious conviction and warm the heart towards others. It does the soul great good to make such a surrender. Such a state of submission on our part could not be attained by many

of us without much devout meditation and humble, fervent prayer. If this were the only effect of such a union of Christian forces, it would pay a thousandfold for all it costs. A brief period of such devout and prayerful communion with our own selves could not fail to change and purify every Christian character. The man would become less a man of the world, and more, far more, a man after the image of our Divine Lord. For the sake of this deepening of the truest, noblest type of Christian character we ought to be willing to make any required sacrifice. There is a call for just this kind of sacrifice in the church of Christ to-day in America. Are we willing to meet the call?

Another reason why such a movement for the organic union of the church would result in a great awakening is based upon the influence of union in Christian work. Just as soon as an evangelist arrives at that point of popularity that his time is fully taken, we find him refusing to accept invitations to labor with any individual church. He makes a condition of his going to any town or city that his meeting shall be a union meeting of practically all the churches of the place. He seeks to separate in the minds of the people the thought that he has anything to do with denominations. He requires that a "tabernacle" capable of seating several thousand shall be erected, regardless of the expense, and that his services shall all be held in this. He sends forward experienced men to organize the working forces, in which denominational lines are broken down. Every effort is made to get away from all that is denominational, and great stress is placed upon the unified condition of the churches during this work. Denominational lines must be obliterated. The clergymen of the various denominations are put to work. At the meetings they are placed in a group by themselves in one of the most conspicuous places in the building. All this is done because the evangelist knows that the spirit of denominationalism is a burden which he cannot carry. The evangelist who carries on this work for six or more weeks demands that

so far as is possible in that community there shall be no denominations. This demand is made, because he knows that the giving up in this way is an excellent preparation on the part of all for the results which he seeks. There is a tremendous power in the mere fact of union. It fires every person engaged in the movement with increased zeal. It is far easier for men to work in crowds than separately. While it is hard for a man to grow enthusiastic in a little weak organization where it is a struggle for life and death, to be associated with a multitude gives new courage, and his enthusiasm burns high. The influence of numbers brings new recruits. Persons who have had little interest are aroused, and join in the campaign. There may as yet have been no movement of the Holy Ghost, but there has been a mighty moving of the people. If such a movement could be permanent, if ministers and people could be so combined for a campaign which should be lasting, what mighty results might we not hope for? This is the method which politicians seek to employ. It is the method which social reformers endeavor to use. It is the method of the modern "revivalist." Then if it works in all these lines, why should we not expect it would work with even greater efficiency if there should be a real and permanent coming together of the great Christian host for the conquest of the world? Such a combination would not only give a more efficient organization of the church, under which to carry forward the work, but would arouse an enthusiasm which would impart new life to the church. Besides this it would remove from the church the appearance of being so inconsistent that, while she seeks to proclaim a Gospel of love, she carries on a warfare among her own brethren. This would enable the church to present a solid front.

There is still another reason why we should expect such an organic unity would bring about a great spiritual awakening. The Scriptures make it evident that there is great advantage in a united prayer, where there is a union of spirit. It is also made evident that agree-

ment among those who pray, a harmony in purpose and spirit greatly aids prayer. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost was preceded by a season of prayer under peculiar circumstances. The little church consisting of something like an hundred and twenty was assembled in one place. They were together with one accord. This continued for the space of ten days. In the past there had been disagreements. The Apostles could hardly be left alone for a brief moment without differences arising which divided them. There had been discordant notes, but on this occasion the narrator is careful to say that there were none; at this time they were of one accord. Under such a condition the Holy Ghost appeared, the tongues of fire were seen, and the glories of salvation were proclaimed in many languages. The speakers were clothed with supernatural power. Peter stood up to explain that these men were not drunk, as they were accused of being, and the explanation brought three thousand souls to Christ. We read Peter's sermon, simple, brief, as a literary production, or a piece of logical reasoning not to be compared with thousands of other addresses, but there was in it marvelous power, because the Holy Ghost used it. Suppose that on the morning of Pentecost there had arisen a controversy between James and Peter concerning their primacy among the Apostles, as there had been on former occasions, and the company had divided, taking sides. What would have been the result? Do you think it probable that the Holy Ghost would have appeared? There is no straining of the imagination when we suppose that one of the conditions of the spiritual power of Peter's sermon was the unity of the little church at the time. When the church was united before God she had power with Him Who moves the world. The spirit of disunion, discord, is such as to repel the Holy Ghost. It is in a serious sense a grieving of the Holy Spirit.

No one can doubt that the unfortunate divisions of Protestantism have greatly retarded the progress of the

church. We are convinced that the greatest need of the church of to-day is a movement towards organic union. The church needs to be united, then she can obtain all else. The divisions have been made, and this fact we cannot change. We can determine that we will not continue the mischief for coming years. Every man in the church is responsible in some measure for the continuance of the present situation. It is the duty of every man to use all the influence which he has to see that something is done. In every community throughout the world, men and women are passing from time into eternity who are not ready for the change. Many of them might have been ready had the church spent less time and money in the fight within her own ranks. Who is responsible? Who must answer for these souls? Not alone the fathers who in the excitement and stubbornness of controversy brought into existence the divisions, but the Christians now living who are maintaining and keeping alive the old quarrels. By our contentions we are stultifying the church. We reduce to the minimum the influence of the church by the multitude of divisions which we maintain. So long as we deliberately continue such a condition it seems hardly probable that Jehovah will in any large measure bestow His power upon His church. First, let us leave our gift at the altar and become reconciled with each other, then we can turn back to our offering and with some assurance expect that God will bestow His rich blessing.

When the churches come together we may expect such an awakening as comes from a sacrifice involved in an honest, unselfish effort to build up the church of God. There will come that enthusiasm which is derived from numbers, making a mighty irresistible movement. Above all this, and better than all, when hostilities cease and the church in spirit and in outward form becomes one organically, and spiritually one in Christ, as He is one in the Father, then will the church be together with one accord, and she may hope to receive that spiritual equipment which shall arm her for such a world con-

quest as men have never known. It is evident from any point of view that such a union of the church would result in a great spiritual awakening. Has the church the character which will measure up to such a standard? Has the clergy enough of the spirit of Christ to become unselfish leaders in such a movement? When the ministers of the church will say such a union shall be brought about by God's help, the question is settled. If the ministry of the church refuse to say this, if they refuse to work to this end the union will not come. The men who have been ordained to the holy office of the Gospel ministry hold in their hands the key to the situation. These men within the next few years may prepare the church for the greatest religious awakening which has ever come to men. The world is ready and calling. Voices crying for help come from all lands. The only real hindrance is found at home. It is found in the ministry of the Protestant church. Shall we take that course which will soon lead to this next great awakening? Some one is responsible for the answer which shall be given to this question. It is not the clergy, but each clergyman.

CHAPTER XIV

A QUESTION OF ACTION

WE now come to a question which should command careful consideration, a question of action. What shall be done? In our churches there are leaders, men of experience and wisdom, who could, if they would, lead off in a movement towards the unity of Christendom which would change the whole church. Must the church wait for these men to move? May there be something for the less prominent, the rank and file of the church, to do while we wait for our leaders? Let us turn to this phase of the subject in our concluding chapter.

There is a force which operates mightily throughout communities and countries, which we call sentiment. This is an interest in a subject, which has arrived at the point where it demands action. When the membership of a church become convinced that a thing ought to be done it will not be long before this conviction will make its presence felt on the part of the church leaders. It would therefore appear that the first, and a most important, step is to seek to reach the rank and file of the church membership. When the members of the church recognize the evils of our present system, and commence to question its wisdom, demanding that there be some improvement, it is certain that it will not be long before there will appear some one able to lead in the movement. Should the members of the sixteen different Protestant Churches in a certain small city become convinced that what was true of their city was equally true of thousands of similar cities in our country, and that they were bearing unnecessary burdens, which instead

of helping in the kingdom of our Lord actually retarded its progress, how long would it be before there would be found some way in which to voice their conviction? If the members of our churches were led to see the wasteful manner in which we employ our money in erecting a multitude of buildings which are not needed, and the use of which really weaken the influence of the church, if they saw how that the putting into the field of so many pastors, in open competition, only resulted in confusion and embarrassment, would not the leaders of the church be led seriously to consider these things and seek for some relief? If they failed it would not be long before other leaders would appear who would show themselves able to lead the way to better things. At present there appears to be a state of indifference. What is most needed is to awaken the conscience. As soon as men commence to think, there will follow the demand that there be a change. It is necessary for Christian people to go farther than to deplore the divided condition of Protestantism. We must feel the responsibility to improve this condition. If in an individual church in some community there are several factions which have arrived at the point where they refuse to worship together in the same house and the town is to join in a five or six weeks' campaign of special services, the first thing which is done is to attempt to bring these discordant elements together. To expect any great success before there has been such a reconciliation is looked upon as hopeless. This is the proper course. Before there will be any real desire for church unity there must be an aroused conscience over the sin of our present state of disruption and discord. There must be aroused a sense of the real need that we cease our wrangling, put aside all bitterness, and commence to undo the evil which has existed for so long. We need to reason concerning our situation as denominations just as we do concerning the factions of an individual church. We need to recognize the sin, and then we may hope that repentance will not be delayed, and a

reunion may follow. If church quarrels be wrong, if such things be sinful, then denominationalism, which is the supreme climax of a church quarrel, must be a sin. It is not the church which sins, an organization does not commit sin, but the persons in the organization, those who manage it. It is time that the membership of the church recognize this responsibility and commence to speak out. Some protests against such a situation should be heard. It will not do for Christian men and women to sit supinely quiet, saying, I did not do it, I cannot mend it. While we did not divide the church it is true that we to-day keep the church divided. We cannot escape the responsibility. We as Christians must clear our skirts before the Great Head of the church.

There is a question as to the course to be followed. One thing is certain, that an aroused interest in the subject would greatly help. That a movement towards union may be effective it must be denominational. It must leave one denomination where now there are two. Real church union must be more than a resolution which has its start in some church court. The people must be back of it. It must appeal to the individual members of the organization. It is well that the start should be among the people. The man who goes to a Conference, Synod or Assembly with the conviction that his constituents expect him to press the question of church unity will be a force. He will stand not as a single man, but as the representatives of a company of men. The man who represents thirty or forty or fifty churches, and it is known that this is the fact, when he speaks men will know that back of him is a body of persons who exercise an influence. Representing such a body, it is wise to give weight to his demands. To succeed the organic unity of the church must be largely a mass movement.

Other questions follow, How soon should this be attempted? Whose place is it to arouse the membership? Who should attempt the task of arousing the interest and working up the enthusiasm? The governing bodies of the church may send down their requirement that

their clergy shall endeavor to accomplish this. More, much more than this must be done. Before the church courts have taken any action the clergy may be agitating the question. The people may be discussing it, and the movement will really be started. This can be done by any one who is interested. The sooner it is commenced the better. There may be no connection with any organized movement, but discussion, constant discussion, will bring it before the people, and as soon as the people consider they must be interested. Such a course would tend to lead preachers to present the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity, instead of the particular views of individual denominations. This would end the factional spirit, and then the situation would be ready for the start. All this can be accomplished, as other movements are started, by getting it before the people. It would therefore appear that the great duty of the hour is for every man who has thought of the subject and is interested to speak out. Let the church hear what you think, and why you think as you do, and soon others will agree with you. Agitation, earnest, thoughtful agitation is the line along which we must move. Already the impression has been made, and the church at large is commencing to move. Let every one interested put his shoulder against the load and push. Soon the whole church will feel the impetus, there will commence real progress, and the dawn of a better day will appear. This method has very much in its favor. Should unwise things sometimes be said there would be no church court or body held responsible. Out of these discussions there would be sure to come many excellent things which would clear the way for ecclesiastical action. Therefore agitation is the duty of the present.

Under the condition through which the church is now passing it is far from probable that the period of agitation would need be long. It is not possible to believe that there are not in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ multitudes of sincere godly men, ready to enter upon any course which duty suggests. It will not be

long before some of these men will feel the call to lead off, and before we are aware of it the church not only will be interested, but will begin to move. When this time comes no power on earth can hold her back. A conviction of duty would necessarily lead to action. This would discover methods. The question which we raise is not a method of church union, but the duty, the obligation of church union. If it be an obligation, then it will not do to say, we would like to see organic union, we wish it might come, duty would demand that we go to work and secure it. Let it be settled first that the organic union of the church is a duty. It is an obligation placed upon the church by God. Then our task is to form this union. The representatives of the church could get together and they could form the basis of a union which could be accepted. It might not be perfect, and like the original organization of the church in Apostolic times, might require some modification after a season. This could be accomplished. But first let us have the basis, it may be in a crude, imperfect form, then perfect it as time suggests. It might be wise that the first basis should be exceedingly simple and easily modified. But the church could form some kind of a platform upon which it could stand and work, until she found out what would be better.

Some cast doubt over the entire question by suggesting that it would be impossible for the various denominations to agree upon a form of government. They tell us that the Presbyterians would tenaciously cling to their Presbyterianism, that the Episcopalians would not give up their Episcopacy, and that the Congregationalists would never surrender their independency, so the whole thing would fall through at its attempted birth. Such statements are sad reflections upon the type of religious character which we find in the church. It is assuming that the men of each church would enter the council with a determination by political management to secure all the concession possible and secure as large a measure of the particular views of their own individual

denomination as they were able. Men of this type of Christian character have no right to a place in any such body. If these church organizations have succeeded in producing nothing above this low, selfish, sectarian spirit, it is time that the fact be recognized. The men who should be entrusted with the forming of such a church should be men who above all else are Christians, and ready to make every lawful surrender for the sake of the kingdom of God. The question is not how much of the Presbyterian polity we can smuggle in, but how can we form an organization which shall have an historical basis, and which in the new and broader organization can do the work in hand best. A company of earnest, prayerful, godly men ought to be able to find some way out. The end is not to secure the recognition of any particular organization, but to adopt a form which can work, and then work it.

But these are questions which do not belong here. These are matters which will have to be decided when the church reaches this point. To-day it is for us to arise and start. With the passing years grows the sense of the deplorable situation in which our beloved church to-day is found. It is impossible that the Great Head of the church should not hold some one responsible for the continuance of this unfortunate condition. Great harm is being done every day we continue in this way. It will not do for us to leave things as they are in the hope that some generation in the far-off future may prove able to solve what we neglect to touch. The day of contention should end. The divisions which have arisen from the quarrels of the past should be healed. It is for us to meet the obligation. If we do not, we deserve punishment. If we do our best, we will discharge our duty, and the day of church unity in the sense for which Christ prayed will be near. The picture of Nero, the Roman Emperor, sitting in his palace fiddling while Rome burned is a sad one. For ages it has been held before the world as an example of the grossest perfidy and the most contemptible baseness.

The only situation which can approach it, and which is even more hideous, is the picture of Christendom sitting, wrangling and quarreling over questions of speculation, godly men hurling epithets at each other, while millions of souls go from this world into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. But some one says God cannot permit these souls to perish because of such a thing; we could not respect Him if He did. But what are we willing to do? If God has proffered the salvation, and given His only begotten Son a sacrifice, how can mortal man say it would be cruel for God to fail to save such persons, when we Christians, who have been commissioned to do this very thing, would not give up our quarrels with each other, that we might do the work which we are in this world to do? May God have mercy upon His church and stir her mightily that she may arise and, clothed in His might, go forth and bring the nations to His throne, a host of redeemed souls. Amen.

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